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THE saint MAGAZINE

VOL. 1, NO. 2

LESLIE CHARTERIS
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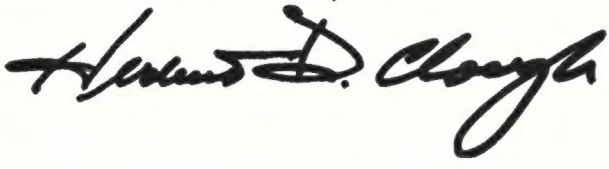
EDITORIAL

For thirty years I have lived in the real and risky world of crime, espionage, and law enforcement. During that time, I had strong doubts that any author, no matter how talented, could convincingly portray the actual terror experienced by a kidnap victim who faced spending several days in an abandoned mine shaft—inhabited by a nest of rattlesnakes! And who, I wondered, could ever describe the unbelievably warm and joyful emotion felt by the person returning that kidnap victim safe and sound to her loved ones?

Since retiring from law enforcement, I have entered the realm of mystery fiction—as an avid fan and as publisher of the new SAINT Magazine. Amazingly, I find this world of make-believe crime just as exhilarating as the real one. I now realize there are a great many masterful fiction writers who can make me, when I read their works, experience all the emotions, the shocks, and the terrors through which their characters go—as well as provide me with the delight of discovering new and surprising intricacies of plot and denouement.

The new SAINT Magazine intends to bring the excitement of both worlds, the real and the imaginary, to our readers—to the faithful fans of Leslie Charteris and the old SAINT and to the welcome new members of the SAINT family. Our pledge to you is to produce a consistently high-quality magazine that never fails to be entertaining and informative. We are sincerely appreciative of the many expressions of support for the success of the new SAINT. Thank you.



THE *saint* MAGAZINE

July, 1984

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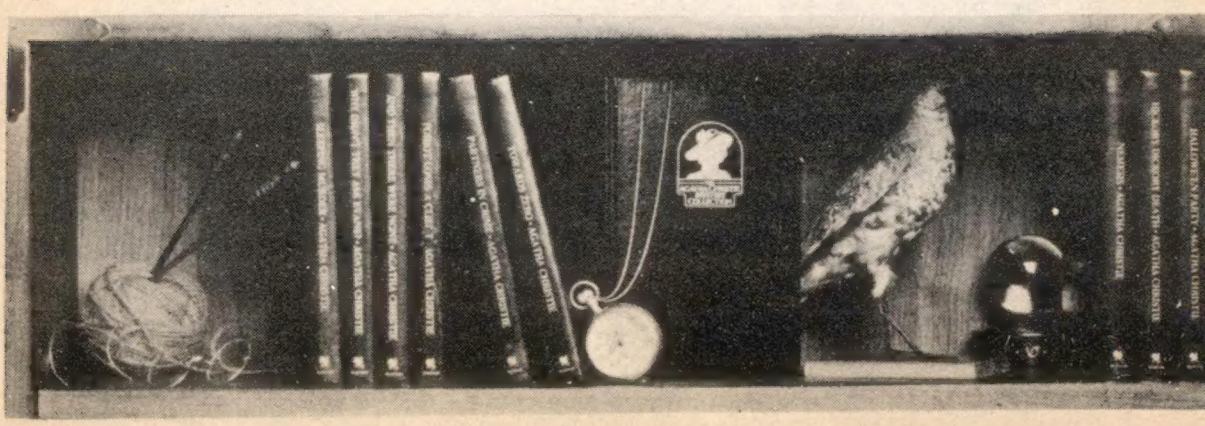

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SAINT SEARCHWORD

by John K. Young

Today's "case" involves terms bound to be overheard wherever legal minds meet. The verdict is yours if you can find 35 of them.

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CELL	LINEUP	PLEA	REVERSAL	TAMPER
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DISCREDIT	MOTION	REBUTTAL	SENTENCE	WEAPON

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(Answers on page 161)

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JOE L. HENSLEY — Cannert continues the quest for his lost Martha. Will he find her before his precious time runs out, or will the crooked sheriff and his buddies prove to be too formidable? . . .

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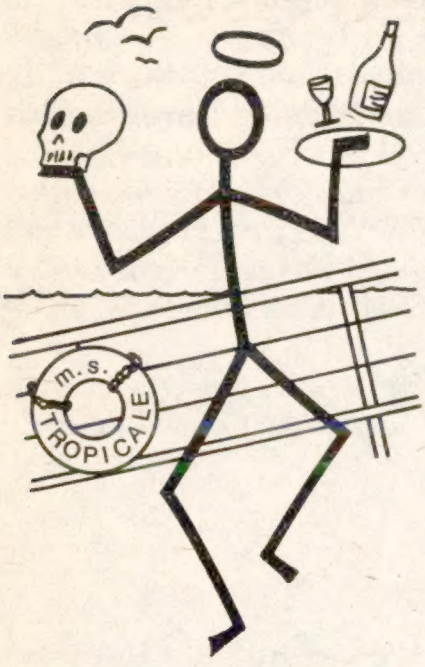

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Because Leslie Charteris—creator of Simon Templar, The Saint—is himself a world traveler and connoisseur of the "good life," his famous character moves with consummate ease and believability in any setting and among people of any social stratum.

This month's tale is delightful not only for its usual entertaining depiction of The Saint's suave charm and incisive deductive reasoning, but also for its sharp characterizations of people typically found at a certain level of society—and, once again, in a most interesting locale.

The Saint's problem: was the instrument of death merely a bizarre murder weapon wielded by a mortal, or was it truly THE ARROW OF GOD....

THE ARROW OF GOD

One of Simon Templar's stock criticisms of the classic type of detective story is that the victim of the murder, the reluctant spark plug of all the entertaining mystery and strife, is usually a mere nonentity who wanders vaguely through the first few pages with the sole purpose of becoming a convenient body in the library by the end of Chapter One. But whatever his own feelings and problems may have been, the personality which has to provide so many people with adequate motives for desiring him to drop dead is largely a matter of hearsay, retrospectively brought out in the conventional process of drawing attention to one suspect after another.

"You could almost," Simon has said, "call him a *corpus derelicti*. Actually, the physical murder should only be the mid-point of the story: the things that led up to it are at least as interesting as the mechanical solution of who done

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it. Personally, I've killed very few people that I didn't know plenty about first."

Coming from a man who is generally regarded as almost a detective-story character himself, this comment is at least worth recording for reference; but it certainly did not apply to the shuffling off of Mr. Floyd Vosper, which caused a brief commotion on the island of New Providence in the early spring of that year.

Why Simon Templar should have been in Nassau (which, for the benefit of the untraveled, is the city of New Providence, which is an island in the Bahamas) at the time is one of those questions which always arise in stories about him, and which can only be answered by repeating that he liked to travel and was just as likely to show up there as in Nova Zembla or Namaqualand. As for why he should have been invited to the house of Mrs. Herbert H. Wexall, that is another irrelevancy which is hardly covered by the fact that he could just as well have shown up at the house of Joe Wallenski (of the arsonist Wallenskis) or the White House—he had friends in many places, legitimate and otherwise. But Mrs. Wexall had some international renown as a lion hunter, even if her stalking had been confined to the variety which roars loudest in plush drawing rooms; and it was not to be expected that the advent of such a creature as Simon Templar would have escaped the attention of her salon safari.

Thus, one noontime, Simon found himself strolling up the driveway and into what little was left of the life of Floyd Vosper. Naturally, he did not know this at the time; nor did he know Floyd Vosper, except by name. In this he was no different from at least fifty million other people in that hemisphere; for Floyd Vosper was not only one of the most widely syndicated pundits of the day, but his books (*Feet of Clay, As I Saw Them* and *The Twenty Worst Men in the World*) had all been the selections of one book club or another and still sold by the millions in reprints. For Mr. Vosper specialized in the ever-popular sport of shattering rep-

utations. In his journalistic years he had met, and apparently had unique opportunities to study, practically every great name in the national and international scene, and could unerringly remember everything in their biographies that they would prefer forgotten, and could impale and epitomize all their weaknesses with devastatingly pin-point precision, leaving them naked and squirming on the operating table of his vocabulary. But what this merciless professional iconoclast was like as a person, Simon had never heard or bothered much to wonder about.

So the first impression that Vosper made on him was a voice, a still-unidentified voice, a dry and deliberate and peculiarly needling voice, which came from behind a bank of riotous hibiscus and oleander.

"My dear Janet," it said, "you must not let your innocent admiration for Reggie's bulging biceps color your estimate of his perspicacity in world affairs. The title of All-American, I hate to disillusion you, has no reference to statesmanship."

There was a rather strained laugh that must have come from Reggie, and a girl's clear young voice said: "That isn't fair, Mr. Vosper. Reggie doesn't pretend to be a genius, but he's bright enough to have a wonderful job waiting for him on Wall Street."

"I don't doubt that he will make an excellent contact man for the more stupid clients," conceded the voice with the measured nasal gripe. "And I'm sure that his education can cope with the simple arithmetic of the Stock Exchange, just as I'm sure it can grasp the basic figures of your father's Dun and Bradstreet. This should not dazzle you with his brilliance, any more than it should make you believe that you have some spiritual fascination that lured him to your feet."

At this point, Simon rounded a curve in the driveway and caught his first sight of the speakers, all of whom looked up at him with reserved curiosity and two-thirds of them with a certain hint of relief.

There was no difficulty in assigning them to their lines—the young redheaded giant with the pleasantly rugged face

and the slim pretty blonde girl, who sat at a wrought-iron table on the terrace in front of the house with a broken deck of cards in front of them which established an interrupted game of gin rummy, and the thin stringy man reclining in a long cane chair with a cigarette holder in one hand and a highball glass in the other.

Simon smiled and said: "Hullo. This is Mrs. Wexall's house, is it?"

The girl said "Yes," and he said: "My name's Templar, and I was invited here."

The girl jumped up and said: "Oh, yes. Lucy told me. I'm her sister, Janet Blaise. This is my fiancé, Reg Herrick. And Mr. Vosper."

Simon shook hands with the two men, and Janet said: "I think Lucy's on the beach. I'll take you around."

Vosper unwound his bony length from the long chair, looking like a slightly dissolute and acidulated mahatma in his white shorts and burnt chocolate tan.

"Let me do it," he said. "I'm sure you two ingénues would rather be alone together. And I need another drink."

He led the way, not into the house but around it, by a flagged path which struck off to the side and meandered through a bower of scarlet poinciana. A breeze rustled in the leaves and mixed flower scents with the sweetness of the sea. Vosper smoothed down his sparse gray hair; and Simon was aware that the man's beady eyes and sharp thin nose were cocked towards him with brash speculation, as if he were already measuring another target for his tongue.

"Templar," he said. "Of course, you must be the Saint—the fellow they call the Robin Hood of modern crime."

"I see you read the right papers," said the Saint pleasantly.

"I read all the papers," Vosper said, "in order to keep in touch with the vagaries of vulgar taste. I've often wondered why the Robin Hood legend should have so much romantic appeal. Robin Hood, as I understand it, was a bandit who indulged in some well-publicized charity—but not, as I recall, at the expense of his own stomach. A good many unscrupu-

lous promoters have also become generous—and with as much shrewd publicity—when their ill-gotten gains exceeded their personal spending capacity, but I don't remember that they succeeded in being glamorized for it."

"There may be some difference," Simon suggested, "in who was robbed to provide the surplus spoils."

"Then," Vosper said challengingly, "you consider yourself an infallible judge of who should be rewarded."

"Oh, no," said the Saint modestly. "Not at all. No more, I'm sure, than you would call yourself the infallible judge of all the people whom you dissect so definitively in print."

He felt the other's probing glance stab at him suspiciously and almost with puzzled incredulity, as if Vosper couldn't quite accept the idea that anyone had actually dared to cross swords with him, and moreover might have scored on the riposte—or if it had happened at all, that it had been anything but a semantic accident. But the Saint's easily inscrutable poise gave no clue to the answer at all; and before anything further could develop there was a paragraphic distraction.

This took the form of a man seated on top of a truncated column which, for reasons best known to the architect, had been incorporated into the design of a wall which curved out from the house to encircle a portion of the shore like a possessive arm. The man had long curly hair that fell to his shoulders, which, with his delicate ascetic features, would have made him look more like a woman if it had not been complemented with an equally curly and silken beard. He sat cross-legged and upright, his hands folded symmetrically in his lap, staring straight out into the blue sky a little above the horizon, so motionless and almost rigid that he might easily have been taken for a tinted statue except for the fluttering of the long flowing white robe he wore.

After rolling with the first reasonable shock of the apparition, Simon would have passed on politely without comment, but the opportunity was irresistible for Vosper to display his virtuosity again, and perhaps also to recover from his momentary confusion.

"That fugitive from a Turkish bath," Vosper said, in the manner of a tired guide to a geek show, "calls himself Astron. He's a nature boy from the Dardanelles who just concluded a very successful season in Hollywood. He wears a beard to cover a receding chin, and long hair to cover a hole in the head. He purifies his soul with a diet of boiled grass and prune juice. Whenever this diet permits him, he meditates. After he was brought to the attention of the Western world by some engineers of the Anglo-Mongolian Oil Company, whom he cured of stomach ulcers by persuading them not to spike their ration of sacramental wine with rubbing alcohol, he began to meditate about the evils of earthly riches."

"Another member of our club?" Simon prompted innocuously.

"Astron maintains," Vosper said, leaning against the pillar and giving out as oracularly as if the object of his dissertation were not sitting on it at all, "that the only way for the holders of worldly wealth to purify themselves is to get rid of as much of it as they can spare. Being himself so pure that it hurts, he is unselfishly ready to become the custodian of as much corrupting cabbage as they would like to get rid of. Of course, he would have no part of it himself, but he will take the responsibility of parking it in a shrine in the Sea of Marmora which he plans to build as soon as there is enough kraut in the kitty."

The figure on the column finally moved. Without any waste motion, it simply expanded its crossed legs like a lazy tongs until it towered at its full height over them.

"You have heard the blasphemer," it said. "But I say to you that his words are dust in the wind, as he himself is dust among the stars that I see."

"I'm a blasphemer," Vosper repeated to the Saint, with a sort of derisive pride combined with the ponderous bonhomie of a vaudeville old-timer in a routine with a talking dog. He looked back up at the figure of the white-robed mystic towering above him and said: "So if you have this direct pipeline to the Almighty, why don't you strike me

dead?"

"Life and death are not in my hands," Astron said, in a calm and confident voice. "Death can only come from the hands of the Giver of all Life. In His own good time He will strike you down, and the arrow of God will silence your mockeries. This I have seen in the stars."

"Quaint, isn't he?" Vosper said, and opened the gate between the wall and the beach.

Beyond the wall, a few steps led down to a kind of Grecian courtyard open on the seaward side, where the paving merged directly into the white sand of the beach. The courtyard was furnished with gaily colored lounging chairs and a well-stocked pushcart bar, to which Vosper immediately directed himself.

"You have visitors, Lucy," he said, without letting it interfere with the important work of reviving his highball.

Out on the sand, on a towel spread under an enormous beach umbrella, Mrs. Herbert Wexall rolled over and said: "Oh, Mr. Templar."

Simon went over and shook hands with her as she stood up. It was hard to think of her as Janet Blaise's sister, for there were at least twenty years between them and hardly any physical resemblances. She was a big woman with an open homely face and patchily sun-bleached hair and a sloppy figure, but she made a virtue of those disadvantages by the cheerfulness with which she ignored them. She was what is rather inadequately known as "a person," which means that she had the personality to dispense with appearances and the money to back it up.

"Good to see you," she said, and turned to the man who had been sitting beside her, as he struggled to his feet. "Do you know Arthur Gresson?"

Mr. Gresson was a full head shorter than the Saint's six foot two, but he weighed a good deal more. Unlike anyone else that Simon had encountered on the premises so far, his skin looked as if it was unaccustomed to exposure. His round body and his round balding brow, under a liberal sheen of oil, had the hot rosy blush which the kiss of the

sun evokes in virgin epidermis.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Templar." His hand was soft and earnestly adhesive.

"I expect you'd like a drink," Lucy Wexall said. "Let's keep Floyd working."

They joined Vosper at the bar wagon, and after he had started to work on the orders she turned back to the Saint and said: "After this formal service, just make yourself at home. I'm so glad you could come."

"I'm sure Mr. Templar will be happy," Vosper said. "He's a man of the world like me. We enjoy Lucy's food and liquor, and in return we give her the pleasure of hitting the society columns with our names. A perfectly businesslike exchange."

"That's progress for you," Lucy Wexall said breezily. "In the old days I'd have had a court jester. Now all I get is a professional stinker."

"That's no way to refer to Arthur," Vosper said, handing Simon a long cold glass. "For your information, Templar, Mr. Gresson—Mr. Arthur *Granville* Gresson—is a promoter. He has a long history of selling phony oil stock behind him. He is just about to take Herb Wexall for another sucker; but since Herb married Lucy, he can afford it. Unless you're sure you can take Janet away from Reggie, I advise you not to listen to him."

Arthur Gresson's elbow nudged Simon's ribs.

"What a character!" he said, almost proudly.

"I only give out with facts," Vosper said. "My advice to you, Templar, is, never be an elephant. Resist all inducements. Because when you reach back into that memory, you will only be laughed at, and the people who should thank you will call you a stinker."

Gresson giggled, deep from his round pink stomach.

"Would you like to get in a swim before lunch?" Lucy Wexall said. "Floyd, show him where he can change."

"A pleasure," Vosper said. "And probably a legitimate part of the bargain."

He thoughtfully refilled his glass before he steered Simon by way of the veranda into the beachward side of the house,

and into a bedroom. He sat on the bed and watched unblinkingly while Simon stripped down and pulled on the trunks he had brought with him.

"It must be nice to have the Body Beautiful," he observed. "Of course, in your business it almost ranks with plant and machinery, doesn't it?"

The Saint's blue eyes twinkled.

"The main difference," he agreed good-humoredly, "is that if I get a screw loose it may not be so noticeable."

As they were starting back through the living room, a small bird-like man in a dark and (for the setting outside the broad picture window) incongruous business suit bustled in by another door. He had the bright baggy eyes behind rimless glasses, the slack but fleshless jowls, and the wide tight mouth which may not be common to all lawyers, bankers, and business executives, but which is certainly found in very few other vocations; and he was followed by a statuesque brunette, carrying a notebook and a sheaf of papers, whose severe tailoring failed to disguise an outstanding combination of curves.

"Herb!" Vosper said. "I want you to meet Lucy's latest addition to the menagerie which already contains Astron and me—Mr. Simon Templar, known as the Saint. Templar—your host, Mr. Wexall."

"Pleased to meet you," said Herbert Wexall, shaking hands briskly.

"And this is Pauline Stone," Vosper went on, indicating the nubile brunette. "The tired businessman's consolation. Whatever Lucy can't supply, she can."

"How do you do," said the girl stoically.

Her dark eyes lingered momentarily on the Saint's torso, and he noticed that her mouth was very full and soft.

"Going for a swim?" Wexall said, as if he had heard nothing. "Good. Then I'll see you at lunch, in a few minutes."

He trotted busily on his way, and Vosper ushered the Saint to the beach by another flight of steps that led directly down from the veranda. The house commanded a small half-moon bay, and both ends of the crescent of sand were

guarded naturally by abrupt rises of jagged coral rock.

"Herbert is the living example of how really stupid a successful businessman can be," Vosper said tirelessly. "He was just an office boy of some kind in the Blaise outfit when he got smart enough to woo and win the boss's daughter. And from that flying start he was clever enough to really pay his way by making Blaise Industries twice as big as even the old man himself had been able to do. And yet he's dumb enough to think that Lucy won't catch on to the extracurricular functions of that busty secretary sooner or later—or that when she does he won't be out on a cold doorstep in the rain .... No, I'm not going in. I'll hold your drink for you."

Simon ran down into the surf and churned seawards for a couple of hundred yards, then turned over and paddled lazily back, coordinating his impressions with idle amusement. The balmy water was still refreshing after the heat of the morning; and when he came out, the breeze had become brisk enough to give him the luxury of a fleeting shiver as the wetness started to evaporate from his tanned skin.

He crossed the sand to the Greek patio, where Floyd Vosper was on duty again at the bar, in a strategic position to keep his own needs supplied with a minimum of effort. Discreet servants were setting up a buffet table. Janet Blaise and Reg Herrick had transferred their gin rummy game and were playing at a table right under the column where Astron had resumed his seat and his cataleptic meditations—a weird juxtaposition of which the three members all seemed equally unconscious.

Simon took Lucy Wexall a martini and said with another glance at the tableau: "Where did you find him?"

"The people who brought him to California sent him to me when he had to leave the States. They gave me such a good time when I was out there, I couldn't refuse to do something for them. He's writing a book, you know, and of course he can't go back to that dreadful place he came from, wherever it is, before he has a chance to finish it in reasonable comfort."

Simon avoided discussing this assumption, but he said:

"What's it like, having a resident prophet in the house?"

"He's very interesting. And quite as drastic as Floyd, in his own way, in summing up people. You ought to talk to him."

Arthur Gresson came over with an hors d'oeuvre plate of smoked salmon and stuffed eggs from the buffet. He said: "Anyone you meet at Lucy's is interesting, Mr. Templar. But if you don't mind my saying so, you have it all over the rest of 'em. Who'd ever think we'd find the Saint looking for crime in the Bahamas?"

"I hope no one will think I'm looking for crime," Simon said deprecatingly, "any more than I take it for granted that you're looking for oil."

"That's where you'd be wrong," Gresson said. "As a matter of fact, I am."

The Saint raised an eyebrow.

"Well, I can always learn something. I'd never heard of oil in the Bahamas."

"I'm not a bit surprised. But you will, Mr. Templar, you will." Gresson sat down, pillowing his round stomach on his thighs. "Just think for a moment about some of the places you have heard of, where there is certainly oil. Let me mention them in a certain order: Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, and the recent strike in the Florida Everglades. We might even include Venezuela to the south. Does that suggest anything to you?"

"Hm-mm," said the Saint thoughtfully.

"A pattern," Gresson said. "A vast central pool of oil somewhere under the Gulf of Mexico, with oil wells dipping into it from the edges of the bowl, where the geological strata have also been forced up. Now think of the islands of the Caribbean as the eastern edge of the same bowl. Why not?"

"It's an interesting theory," said the Saint.

"Mr. Wexall thinks so, too, and I hope he's going into partnership with me."

"Herbert can afford it," intruded the metallic sneering voice of Floyd Vosper. "But before you decide to buy in, Templar, you'd better check with New York about the time when Mr. Gresson thought he could dig oil in the Catskills."

"Shut up, Floyd," said Mrs. Wexall, "and get me another martini."

Arthur Gresson chuckled in his paunch like a happy Buddha.

"What a guy!" he said. "What a ribber. And he gets everyone mad. He kills me!"

Herbert Wexall came down from the veranda and beamed around. As a sort of tacit announcement that he had put aside his work for the day, he had changed into a sport shirt on which various exotic fish were depicted wandering through vines of seaweed, but he retained his business trousers and business shoes and business face.

"Well," he said, inspecting the buffet and addressing the world at large. "Let's come and get it whenever we're hungry."

As if a spell had been snapped, Astron removed himself from the contemplation of the infinite, descended from his pillar, and began to help himself to cottage cheese and caviar on a foundation of lettuce leaves.

Simon drifted in the same direction and found Pauline Stone beside him, saying: "What do you feel like, Mr. Templar?"

Her indication of having come off duty was a good deal more radical than her employer's. In fact, the bathing suit which she had changed into seemed to be based more on the French minimums of the period than on any British tradition. There was no doubt that she filled it opulently; and her question amplified its suggestiveness with undertones which the Saint felt it wiser not to challenge at that moment.

"There's so much to drool over," he said, referring studiously to the buffet table. "But that green turtle aspic looks pretty good to me."

She stayed with him when he carried his plate to a table as thoughtfully diametric as possible from the berth chosen by Floyd Vosper, even though Astron had already settled there in temporary solitude. They were promptly joined by Reg Herrick and Janet Blaise, and slipped at once into an

easy exchange of banalities.

But even then it was impossible to escape Vosper's tongue. It was not many minutes before his saw-edged voice whined across the patio above the general level of harmless chatter:

"When are you going to tell the Saint's fortune, Astron? That ought to be worth hearing."

There was a slightly embarrassed lull, and then everyone went on talking again; but Astron looked at the Saint with a gentle smile and said quietly: "You are a seeker after truth, Mr. Templar, as I am. But when instead of truth you find falsehood, you will destroy it with a sword. I only say, 'this is falsehood, and God will destroy it. Do not come too close, lest you be destroyed with it.' "

"Okay," Herrick growled, just as quietly. "But if you're talking about Vosper, it's about time someone destroyed it."

"Sometimes," Astron said, "God places his arrow in the hand of a man."

For a few moments that seemed unconscionably long, nobody said anything; and then, before the silence spread beyond their small group, the Saint said casually: "Talking of arrows—I hear that the sport this season is to go hunting sharks with a bow and arrow."

Herrick nodded with a healthy grin.

"It's a lot of fun. Would you like to try it?"

"Reggie's terrific," Janet Blaise said. "He shoots like a regular Howard Hill, but of course he uses a bow that nobody else can pull."

"I'd like to try," said the Saint, and the conversation slid harmlessly along the tangent he had provided.

After lunch everyone went back to the beach, with the exception of Astron, who retired to put his morning's meditations on paper. Chatter surrendered to an afternoon torpor which subdued even Vosper.

An indefinite while later, Herrick aroused with a yell and plunged roaring into the sea, followed by Janet Blaise. They were followed by others, including the Saint. An interlude of aquatic brawling developed somehow into a pickup game of

touch football on the beach, which was delightfully confused by recurrent arguments about who was supposed to be on which of the unequal sides. This boisterous nonsense churned up enough sand for the still freshening breeze to spray over Floyd Vosper, who by that time had drunk enough to be trying to sleep under the big beach umbrella, to finally get the misanthropic oracle back on his feet.

"Perhaps," he said witheringly, "I had better get out of the way of you perennial juveniles before you convert me into a dune." He stalked off along the beach and lay down again about a hundred yards away.

Simon noticed him still there, flat on his face and presumably unconscious, when the game eventually broke up through a confused water-polo phase, to leave everyone gasping and laughing and tripping on the patio with no immediate resurge of inspiration. It was the last time he saw the unpopular Mr. Vosper alive.

"Well," Arthur Gresson observed, mopping his short round body with a towel, "at least one of us seems to have enough sense to know when to lie down."

"And to choose the only partner who'd do it with him," Pauline added vaguely.

Herbert Wexall glanced along the beach in the direction that they both referred to, then glanced for further inspiration at the waterproof watch he was still wearing.

"It's almost cocktail time," he said. "How about it, anyone?"

His wife shivered and said: "It's going to blow like a son-of-a-gun any minute. Let's all go in and get some clothes on first—then we'll be set for the evening. You'll stay for supper of course, Mr. Templar?"

"I hadn't planned to make a day of it," Simon protested diffidently, and was promptly overwhelmed from all quarters.

He found his way back to the room where he had left his clothes, without the benefit of Floyd Vosper's chatty courier service, and made leisured and satisfactory use of the fresh-

water shower and monogrammed towels. Even so, when he sauntered back into the living room, he almost had the feeling of being lost in a strange and empty house, for all the varied individuals who had peopled the stage so vividly and vigourously a short time before had vanished into other and unknown seclusions and had not yet returned.

He lighted a cigarette and strolled idly towards the picture window that overlooked the veranda and the sea. Everything around his solitude was so still, excepting the subsonic suggestion of distant movements within the house, that he was tempted to walk on tiptoe; and yet, outside the broad pane of plate glass, the fronds of coconut palms were fluttering in a thin febrile frenzy, and there were lacings of white cream on the incredible jade of the short waves simmering on the beach.

He noticed, first, in what should have been a lazily sensual survey of the panorama, that the big beach umbrella was no longer where he had first seen it, down to his right outside the pseudo-Grecian patio. He saw, as his eye wandered on, that it had been moved a hundred yards or so to his left—in fact, to the very place where Floyd Vosper was still lying. It occurred to him first that Vosper must have moved it himself, except that no shade was needed in the brief and darkening twilight. After that he noticed that Vosper seemed to have turned over on his back; and then, at last, as the Saint focused his eyes, he saw with a weird thrill that the shaft of the umbrella stood straight up out of the left side of Vosper's scrawny brown chest, not in the sand beside him at all, but like a gigantic pin that had impaled a strange and inelegant insect—or, in a fantastic phrase that was not Simon's at all, like the arrow of God.

Major Rupert Fanshire, the senior Superintendent of Police, which made him third in the local hierarchy after the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, paid tribute to the importance of the case by taking personal charge of it. He was a slight pinkish blond man with rather large and very bright blue eyes and such a discreetly modulated voice that it com-

manded rapt attention through the basic effort of trying to hear what it was saying. He sat at an ordinary writing desk in the living room, with a Bahamian sergeant standing stiffly beside him, and contrived to turn the whole room into an office in which seven previously happy-go-lucky adults wriggled like guilty schoolchildren whose teacher has been found libelously caricatured on their blackboard.

He said, with wholly impersonal conciseness: "Of course, you all know by now that Mr. Vosper was found on the beach with the steel spike of an umbrella through his chest. My job is to find out how it happened. To start with, the topography suggests that the person responsible came from, or through, this house. I've heard all your statements, and all they seem to amount to is that each of you was going about his own business at the time when this might have happened."

"All I know," Herbert Wexall said, "is that I was in my study, reading and signing the letters that I dictated this morning."

"And I was getting dressed," said his wife.

"So was I," said Janet Blaise.

"I guess I was in the shower," said Reginald Herrick.

"I was having a bubble bath," said Pauline Stone.

"I was still working," said Astron. "This morning I started a new chapter of my book—in my mind, you understand. I do not write by putting everything on paper. For me it is necessary to meditate, to feel, to open floodgates in my mind, so that I can receive the wisdom that comes from beyond the . . . ."

"Quite," Major Fanshire assented politely. "The point is that none of you have alibis, if you need them. You were all going about your own business, in your own rooms. Mr. Templar was changing in the late Mr. Vosper's room . . . ."

"I wasn't here," Arthur Gresson said recklessly. "I drove back to my own place—I'm staying at the Fort Montagu Beach Hotel. I wanted a clean shirt. I drove back there, and when I came back here all this had happened."

"There's not much difference," Major Fanshire said. "Dr.

Rassin tells me we couldn't establish the time of death within an hour or two, anyway. So the next thing we come to is the question of motive. Did anyone here," Fanshire asked almost innocently, "have any really serious trouble with Mr. Vosper?"

There was an uncomfortable silence, which the Saint finally broke by saying: "I'm an outsider, so I'll take the rap. I'll answer for everyone."

The Superintendent cocked his bright eyes.

"Very well, sir. What would you say?"

"My answer," said the Saint, "is—everybody."

There was another silence, but a very different one, in which it seemed, surprisingly, as if all of them relaxed as unanimously as they had stiffened before. And yet, in its own way, this relaxation was as self-conscious and uncomfortable as the preceding tension had been. Only the Saint, who had every attitude of the completely careless onlooker, and Major Fanshire, whose deferential patience was impregnably correct, seemed immune to the interplay of hidden strains.

"Would you care to go any further?" Fanshire asked.

"Certainly," said the Saint. "I'll go anywhere. I can say what I like, and I don't have to care whether anyone is on speaking terms with me tomorrow. I'll go on record with my opinion that the late Mr. Vosper was one of the most unpleasant characters I've ever met. I'll make the statement, if it isn't already general knowledge, that he made a specialty of needling everyone he spoke to or about. He goaded everyone with nasty little things that he knew, or thought he knew, about them. I wouldn't blame anyone here for wanting, at least theoretically, to kill him."

"I'm not exactly concerned with your interpretation of blame," Fanshire said detachedly. "But if you have any facts, I'd like to hear them."

"I have no facts," said the Saint coolly. "I only know that in the few hours I've been here, Vosper made statements to me, a stranger, about everyone here, any one of which could be called fighting words."

"You will have to be more specific," Fanshire said.

"Okay," said the Saint. "I apologize in advance to anyone it hurts. Remember, I'm only repeating the kind of thing that made Vosper a good murder candidate. I am now specific. In my hearing he called Reg Herrick a dumb athlete who was trying to marry Janet Blaise for her money. He suggested that Janet was a stupid juvenile for taking him seriously. He called Astron a commercial charlatan. He implied that Lucy Wexall was a dope and a snob. He insinuated that Herb Wexall had more use for his secretary's sex than for her stenography, and he thought out loud that Pauline was amenable. He called Mr. Gresson a crook to his face."

"And during all this," Fanshire said, with an inoffensiveness that had to be heard to be believed, "he said nothing about you?"

"He did indeed," said the Saint. "He analyzed me, more or less, as a flamboyant phony."

"And you didn't object to that?"

"I hardly could," Simon replied blandly, "after I'd hinted to him that I thought he was even phonier."

It was a line on which a stage audience could have tittered, but the tensions of the moment let it sink with a slow thud.

Fanshire drew down his upper lip with one forefinger and nibbled it inscrutably.

"I expect this bores you as much as it does me, but this is the job I'm paid for. I've got to say that all of you had the opportunity, and from what Mr. Templar says, you could all have had some sort of motive. Well, now I've got to look into what you might call the problem of physical possibility."

Simon Templar lighted a cigarette. It was the only movement anyone made, and after that he was the most intent listener of them all as Fanshire went on: "Dr. Rassin says, and I must say I agree with him, that to drive that umbrella shaft clean through a man's chest must have taken quite exceptional strength. It seems to be something that no woman, and probably no ordinary man, could have done."

His pale bright eyes came to rest on Herrick as he fin-

ished speaking, and the Saint found his own eyes following others in the same direction.

A picture formed in his mind: the young giant towering over a prostrate Vosper, the umbrella raised in his mighty arms like a fantastic spear, and the setting sun flaming on his red head as, like an avenging angel, he thrust downwards with all the power of those herculean shoulders . . . and then, as Herrick's face began to flush under the awareness of so many stares, Janet Blaise suddenly cried out: "No! No—it couldn't have been Reggie!"

Fanshire's gaze transferred itself to her curiously, and she said in a stammering rush: "You see, it's silly, but we didn't quite tell the truth, I mean about being in our own rooms. As a matter of fact, Reggie was in my room most of the time. We were—talking."

The Superintendent cleared his throat and continued to gaze at her stolidly for a while. He didn't make any comment. But presently he looked at the Saint in the same dispassionately thoughtful way that he had first looked at Herrick.

Simon said calmly: "Yes, I was just wondering myself whether I could have done it. And I had a rather interesting thought."

"Yes, Mr. Templar?"

"Certainly, it must take quite a lot of strength to drive a spike through a man's chest with one blow. But now remember that this wasn't just a spike, or a spear. It had an enormous great umbrella on top of it. Now think what would happen if you were stabbing down with a thing like that?"

"Well, what would happen?"

"The umbrella would be like a parachute. It would be like a sort of sky anchor holding the shaft back. The air resistance would be so great that I'm wondering how anyone, even a very strong man, could get much momentum into the thrust. And the more force he put into it, the more likely he'd be to lift himself off the ground, rather than drive the spike down."

Fanshire digested this, blinking, and took his full time to

do it.

"That certainly is a thought," he admitted. "But damn it," he exploded, "we know it was done. So it must have been possible."

"There's something entirely backwards about that logic," said the Saint. "Suppose we say, if it was impossible, maybe it wasn't done."

"Now you're being a little ridiculous," Fanshire snapped. "We saw . . . ."

"We saw a man with the sharp iron-tipped shaft of a beach umbrella through his chest. We jumped to the natural conclusion that somebody stuck it into him like a sword. And that may be just what a clever murderer meant us to think."

Then it was Arthur Gresson who shattered the fragile silence by leaping out of his chair like a bouncing ball.

"I've got it!" he yelped. "Believe me, everybody, I've got it! This'll kill you!"

"I hope not," Major Fanshire said drily. "But what is it?"

"Listen," Gresson said. "I knew something rang a bell somewhere, but I couldn't place it. Now it all comes back to me. This is something I only heard at the hotel the other day, but some of you must have heard it before. It happened about a year ago, when Gregory Peck was visiting here. He stayed at the same hotel where I am, and one afternoon he was on the beach, and the wind came up, just like it did today, and it picked up one of those beach umbrellas and carried it right to where he was lying, and the point just grazed his ribs and gave him a nasty gash, but what the people who saw it happen were saying was that if he'd been just a few inches the other way, it could have gone smack into his heart, and you'd've had a film star killed in the most sensational way that ever was. Didn't you ever hear about that, Major?"

"Now that you mention it," Fanshire said slowly, "I think I did hear something about it."

"Well," Gresson said, *"what if it happened aqain this afternoon, to someone who wasn't as lucky as Peck?"*

There was another of those electric silences of assimilation, out of which Lucy Wexall said: "Yes, I heard about that." And Janet said: "Remember, I told you about it! I was visiting some friends at the hotel that day, and I didn't see it happen, but I was there for the commotion."

Gresson spread out his arms, his round face gleaming with excitement and perspiration.

"That's got to be it!" he said. "You remember how Vosper was lying under the umbrella outside the patio when we started playing touch football, and he got sore because we were kicking sand over him, and he went off to the other end of the beach? But he didn't take the umbrella with him. The wind did that, after we all went off to change. And this time it didn't miss!"

Suddenly, Astron stood up beside him; but where Gresson had risen like a jumping bean, this was like the growth and unfolding of a tree.

"I have heard many words," Astron said, in his firm gentle voice, "but now at last I think I am hearing truth. No man struck the blasphemer down. The arrow of God smote him, in his wickedness and his pride, as it was written long ago in the stars."

"You can say that again," Gresson proclaimed triumphantly. "He sure had it coming."

Again the Saint drew at his cigarette and created his own vision behind half-closed eyes. He saw the huge umbrella plucked from the sand by the invisible fingers of the wind, picked up and hurled spinning along the deserted twilight beach, its great mushroom spread of gaudy canvas no longer a drag now but a sail for the wind to set behind, the whole thing transformed into a huge unearthly dart flung with literally superhuman power—the arrow of God indeed. A fantastic, an almost unimaginable solution; and yet it did not have to be imagined, because there were witnesses that it had almost happened once before ....

Fanshire was saying: "By Jove, that's the best suggestion I've heard yet—without any religious implication, of course. It sounds as if it could be the right answer!"

Simon's eyes opened on him fully for an instant, almost pityingly, and then closed completely as the true and right and complete answer rolled through the Saint's mind like a long peaceful wave.

"I have one question to ask," said the Saint.

"What's that?" Fanshire said, too polite to be irritable, yet with a trace of impatience, as if he hated the inconvenience of even defending such a divinely tailored theory.

"Does anyone here have a gun?" asked the Saint.

There was an almost audible creaking of knitted brows, and Fanshire said: "Really, Mr. Templar, I don't quite follow you."

"I only asked," said the Saint imperturbably, "if anyone here had a gun. I'd sort of like to know the answer before I explain why."

"I have a revolver," Wexall said with some perplexity. "What about it?"

"Could I see it, please?" said the Saint.

"I'll get it," said Pauline Stone.

She got up and left the room.

"You know I have a gun, Fanshire," Wexall said. "You gave me my permit. But I don't see . . . . "

"Neither do I," Fanshire said.

The Saint said nothing. He devoted himself to his cigarette, with impregnable detachment, until the voluptuous secretary came back. Then he put out the cigarette and extended his hand.

Pauline looked at Wexall, hesitantly, and at Fanshire. The Superintendent nodded a sort of grudging acquiescence. Simon took the gun and broke it expertly.

"A Colt .38 Detective Special," he said. "Unloaded." He sniffed the barrel. "But fired quite recently," he said, and handed the gun to Fanshire.

"I used it myself this morning," Lucy Wexall said cheerfully. "Janet and Reg and I were shooting at the Portuguese men-of-war. There were quite a lot of them around before the breeze came up."

"I wondered what the noise was," Wexall said vaguely.

"I was coming up the drive when I heard it first," Gresson said, "and I thought the next war had started."

"This is all very interesting," Fanshire said, removing the revolver barrel from the proximity of his nostrils with a trace of exasperation, "but I don't see what it has to do with the case. Nobody has been shot . . . ."

"Major Fanshire," said the Saint quietly, "may I have a word with you, outside? And will you keep that gun in your pocket so that at least we can hope there will be no more shooting?"

The Superintendent stared at him for several seconds, and at last unwillingly got up.

"Very well, Mr. Templar." He stuffed the revolver into the side pocket of his rumpled white jacket and glanced back at his impassive chocolate sentinel. "Sergeant, see that nobody leaves here, will you?"

He followed Simon out onto the veranda and said almost peremptorily: "Come on now, what's this all about?"

It was so much like a flash of a faraway Scotland Yard Inspector that the Saint had to control a smile. But he took Fanshire's arm and led him persuasively down the front steps to the beach. Off to their left, a tiny red glowworm blinked low down under the silver stars.

"You still have somebody watching the place where the body was found?" Simon asked.

"Of course," Fanshire grumbled. "As a matter of routine. But the sand's much too soft to show any footprints, and . . . ."

"Will you walk over there with me?"

Fanshire sighed briefly and trudged beside him. His politeness was dogged but unfailing. He was a type that had been schooled from adolescence never to give up, even to the ultimate in ennui. In the interests of total fairness, he would be game to the last yawn.

He did go so far as to say: "I don't know what you're getting at, but why *couldn't* it have been an accident?"

"I never heard a better theory in my life," said the Saint equably, "but with one insuperable flaw."

"What's that?"

"Only," said the Saint, very gently, "that the wind wasn't blowing the right way."

Major Fanshire kept his face straight ahead to the wind and said nothing more after that until they reached the glowworm that they were making for and it became a cigarette end that a constable dropped as he came to attention.

The place where Floyd Vosper had been lying was marked off in a square of tape, but there was nothing out of the ordinary about it except some small stains that showed almost black under the flashlight which the constable produced.

"May I mess up the scene a bit?" Simon asked.

"I don't see why not," Fanshire said doubtfully. "It doesn't show anything, really."

Simon went down on his knees and began to dig with his hands, around and under the place where the stains were. Minutes later he stood up, with sand trickling through his fingers, and showed Fanshire the mushroomed scrap of metal that he had found.

"A .38 bullet," Fanshire said, and whistled.

"And I think you'll be able to prove it was fired from the gun you have in your pocket," said the Saint. "Also you'd better have a sack of sand picked up from where I was digging. I think a laboratory examination will find that it also contains fragments of bone and human flesh."

"You'll have to explain this to me," Fanshire said quite humbly.

Simon dusted his hands and lighted a cigarette.

"Vosper was lying on his face when I last saw him," he said, "and I think he was as much passed out as sleeping. With the wind and the surf and the soft sand it was easy for the murderer to creep up on him and shoot him in the back. But the murderer didn't want you looking for guns and comparing bullets. The umbrella was the inspiration. I don't have to remind you that the exit hole of a bullet is much larger than the entrance. By turning Vosper's body over, the murderer found a hole in his chest into which it couldn't have been too difficult to force the umbrella

shaft—thus obliterating the original wound and confusing everybody in one single operation."

"Let's get back to the house," said the Superintendent abruptly.

After a while, as they walked, Fanshire said: "It's going to feel awfully funny, having to arrest Herbert Wexall."

"Good God!" said the Saint, in honest astonishment. "You weren't thinking of doing that?"

Fanshire stopped and blinked at him.

"Why not?"

"Did Herbert seem at all guilty when he admitted he had a gun? Did he seem at all uncomfortable—I don't mean just puzzled, like you were—about having it produced? Was he ready with the explanation of why it still smelled of being fired?"

"But if someone else used Wexall's gun," Fanshire pondered laboriously, "why should they go to such lengths to make it look as if no gun was used at all, when Wexall would obviously have been suspected?"

"Because it was somebody who didn't want Wexall to take the rap," said the Saint. "Because Wexall is the goose who could still lay golden eggs."

The Superintendent pulled out a handkerchief and wiped his face.

"My God," he said, "you mean you think Lucy . . . . "

"I think we have to go all the way back to the prime question of motive," said the Saint. "Floyd Vosper was a nasty man who made dirty cracks about everyone here. But few people become murderers because of a dirty crack. Very few people kill other people on points of principle. Vosper called us all variously dupes, phonies, cheaters, and fools. But since he had roughly the same description for all of us, we could all laugh it off. There was only one person about whom he made the unforgivable accusation . . . . Now shall we rejoin the mob?"

"You'd better do this your own way," Fanshire muttered.

Simon Templar took him up the steps to the veranda and back through the French doors into the living room, where

all eyes turned to them in deathly silence.

"A paraffin test will prove who fired that revolver in the last twenty-four hours, aside from those who have already admitted it," Simon said, as if there had been no interruption. "And you'll remember, I'm sure, who supplied that very handy theory about the arrow of God."

"Astron!" Fanshire gasped.

"Oh, no," said the Saint, a little tiredly. "He only said that God sometimes places his arrow in the hands of a man. And I feel quite sure that a wire to New York will establish that there is actually a criminal file under the name of Granville, with fingerprints and photos that should match Mr. Gresson's—as Vosper's fatally elephantine memory remembered. That was the one crack he shouldn't have made—mentioning Granville as Gresson's middle name—because it was the only one that was more than gossip or shrewd insult, the only one that could be easily proved, and the only one that had a chance of upsetting an operation which was all set—if you'll excuse the phrase—to make a big killing."

Major Fanshire fingered his upper lip.

"I don't know," he began; and then, as Arthur Granville Gresson began to rise like a floating balloon from his chair, and the ebony-faced sergeant moved to intercept him like a well-disciplined automaton, he knew. ST

FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR.

"Mike" Nevins introduced us to his appealing new character, Detective Sergeant Eugenia "Gene" Holt, in last month's issue of The SAINT. In JUDGMENT REVERSED, Gene Holt is faced with a criminal whose logic is so devastating that it may well make you shudder, too.

JUDGMENT REVERSED

The thunderstorm had hit some power lines, turning the Hillside Heights subdivision into a checkerboard pattern—clusters of lit houses alternating with clumps of total darkness. Twice she lost her way among the twisting streets and had to pull over at an intersection and wait for the next lightning flash in order to read the signs. As she turned her car into Cedar Way, she saw the knot of police cruisers around a big house in the middle of the block. A boxy ambulance, with roof globe whirling and siren growling, swished past her on its way downhill to the morgue.

The run from her car to the front door soaked her to the skin. The huge stucco house blazed with light. No power outage here, thank heaven.

Captain Donovan was waiting for her in the front hall with a styrofoam cup filled with steaming coffee. "Thanks for coming out on your off-duty night, Gene. Like I said on the phone, there's no question who killed the judge, but she won't talk about it to anyone but another woman."

"And last time I looked, I was the only woman on the Major Case Squad." Detective Sergeant Gene Holt sipped the scalding coffee gratefully. "So my favorite federal judge has been permanently reversed. I almost wish we didn't know who killed him."

"Which of Meston's Monsters was it that got you ticked

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off at him?"

"You mean I can only pick one?" Holt asked. "Compulsory busing of thousands of kids dozens of miles a day. Race and sex quotas in hiring and promotion and firing. Sending a college professor to jail because he wouldn't tell how he voted on a faculty tenure matter. Then, the same week, ordering God knows how many rapists and murderers released from maximum security prisons because conditions weren't up to Hilton Hotel standards. And once a federal judge is appointed, there's virtually no way of kicking him off the bench! Look, Jim, let's change the subject before I forget my duty here. Tell me more about Meston's housekeeper."

"All we know, so far, is what the neighbors say. Meston was a widower and lived alone. The housekeeper's name is Elizabeth Anderson. She's worked here about six months, nine to five, three days a week—plus overtime when the judge threw a cocktail party, which wasn't often. She's about forty. Still quite good-looking. We don't know where she bought the gun."

"You think it's like the Scarsdale case? They were having an affair and she killed him out of jealousy?"

"Not Meston," Donovan said.

Then Gene remembered something but kept it to herself.

"She's in the guest bedroom," Donovan continued, "down the hall and to your right. Quiet as a moose and cool as a clam." The captain had a genius for scrambling clichés.

Gene gulped the last of her coffee. Her wet shoes squished as she walked along the terrazzo-floored hall to the room where the murderess waited. At her knock, Sergeant Hapgood threw the door open.

"Great night for ducks," he grunted, then nodded towards the woman sitting in shadow on the edge of the fourposter bed.

"You read her rights to her?"

"Yeah. She didn't want a lawyer, just a woman officer. She's all yours, lady." Hapgood sauntered out of the room and shut the door gently. Gene pulled a rocking chair beside the bed, sat, and studied the unmoving woman. Trim fig-

ure, dark severe dress, hair graying like Gene's own. There was a sense of relaxation and peace about the other woman that tugged at Gene's heart. It somehow reminded her of the way it had been after sex with her husband during the seven years before the divorce. The last thing she saw was that the other woman was barefoot.

"I'm Detective Sergeant Holt," she said. She dug her wallet out of her purse, found her Miranda card and, to make doubly sure, read Mrs. Anderson her rights again.

"I know all that," the housekeeper said. "I know more law than you can imagine." Her voice was quiet, firm, controlled.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Only my way. Only if you don't interrupt."

Gene took the miniature cassette recorder from her bag and pressed the red button as the confession began.

It was all so easy, so impossibly easy, that I knew it was *meant*. I applied for the housekeeper's job on a Monday, came here for an interview that Saturday, and Meston hired me the next day. That was early this year, in February I think. I've always been a good homemaker, and I worked loyally for that maniac during all those months while I waited for the time.

When the storm came up so suddenly late this afternoon, I knew it would be today. The thunder told me. *Now. Now, now, now.*

I finished cleaning just as though it were an ordinary day. Then, just as I always do on Fridays, I went into the judge's study and took the envelope with my week's pay that he always left for me on the credenza. But I didn't go home. I simply drove my car several blocks away so that he'd think I was gone, and then I walked back just as the rain was starting. I came into this room and took off my shoes and sat on the bed, the way I'm sitting now, and waited. I wanted to turn on the radio but didn't dare, you see, because I wasn't sure, with the storm, that I'd be able to hear his car turn into the driveway.

But even with the thunder, I heard it loud and clear. Oh

yes, every little bit of it was meant.

About seven o'clock, I heard the garage door opening—he had an electric-eye thing in his car that did it automatically—and then I heard him go from the garage into the house. That was when I took the gun out of my purse and set it in my lap. I just let my ears follow the sounds as he came in. As usual, he went straight into the study to make himself a scotch-on-the-rocks. I gave him a few minutes to relax and get settled. Then I stood up, walked very quietly across the hall, and stopped just inside the study doorway about eight feet from his desk.

"Look at me, you filthy murderer!"

The first thing I saw in his eyes was surprise, then concern, and then what I wanted to see—terror. He jerked his head up from the advance sheet he was reading and stuck his hands in the air as if I were some kind of criminal, a burglar or something. He started to squeal something at me like, "Mrs. Anderson, what in God's name . . . ?"

"My name is not Anderson," I told him. "It's Martha Whitney. I am the widow of Paul Whitney and the mother of Paul Whitney, Jr., whom you murdered in cold blood."

"Whitney?" I could almost see his mind racing backwards through his memories, trying to pin down the name.

"How soon some of us forget!" I told him. "Surely you remember your own landmark decision two years ago in the case of *Doe v. State University Medical School.* You ordered the medical school to readmit a student who'd had a long psychotic history of attacking himself and other people with knives. You ruled that being a psychotic slasher was a handicap and that the school's refusing to readmit that maniac was discrimination on the basis of a handicap, which was illegal under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973."

He seemed flabbergasted that a mere housekeeper could know so much law—I told you, Sergeant, that my legal knowledge is greater than you could imagine—but that didn't stop him from trying to defend himself. "Mrs. Whitney, I was merely following precedent. . . ."

I couldn't bear to listen to him another second. "*You*

made the precedent! It was your fault that that madman was on duty in the University Hospital emergency room the day he snapped and ran amok with a surgical knife. He seriously injured seven people and killed four others—including my husband and my little boy, who'd cut his finger on a toy and needed stitches. Don't tell me you were only following the law, you disgusting pervert! I buried my husband and son and waited all these months. I wanted to kill you in public, cut you up with a knife the way you did to my family. I followed you for a few days last year, waiting for my chance. Then I thought about running you down with my car as you were crossing the street, but that was too unwieldy. Innocent people might have been hurt—something that never crossed your wonderful judicial mind in the Doe case!

"Then I had to look for a job to support myself. When I saw the advertisement for a housekeeper you put in the paper, I recognized your address from the days I'd been following you. All of a sudden, I knew just what I had to do. If you hadn't hired me, I would have known it wasn't meant for me to get justice for my family. But you did, you did, and it was meant and it is meant!" I extended my arm and aimed the pistol at his head and began to squeeze the trigger.

And still the mad fool tried to defend himself! "The statute was clear!" he screamed. 'No otherwise qualified handicapped individual shall solely, by reason of his handicap, be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program. . . .' Oh, he had good reason to memorize that statute, didn't he?

But I finished the argument for him. "And you just mechanically applied the law without bias or prejudice. Just as I now mechanically apply another law to you." That was when I squeezed the trigger five times and watched his face split apart.

And his body writhe and shake in his wheelchair.

And then you called us," Gene Holt finished.

"Naturally." The housekeeper smiled at Holt's incomprehen-

sion. "Oh, don't you understand yet, Sergeant? This is all meant, too! I never planned to walk away from here scot free. I *want* to be tried for killing Meston."

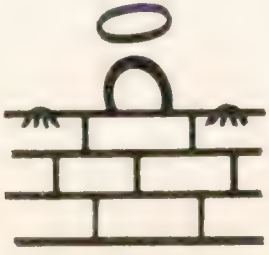
"You want . . . ?"

"Of course, I'll be found not guilty by reason of insanity —as if only a lunatic would hold a judge accountable for his decisions—and put in the state hospital for the criminally insane. Once I'm committed," her smile broadened to a grin of anticipatory delight, "I will apply to take the Law School Admission Test. If I'm turned down, I'll exercise my right to an attorney and sue to make them let me take the test. I've always tested well, Sergeant. I know I'll score high on the LSAT, believe me. Then, of course, I'll apply to each state university law school in the country for admission."

That was the moment when Gene really did understand. "And if they turn you down. . . ."

"It is illegal to discriminate against me because of my mental handicap," Mrs. Whitney said proudly. *"Doe v. State University Medical School.* When I finish law school—by correspondence, or on a work release program, or whatever—I'll apply to take bar examinations, and sue again if I'm denied. You see, Sergeant, from the day I actually read the decision of Judge Meston that cost my husband and son their lives, I knew I was meant to be a lawyer. And once I'm licensed to practice, God help anyone who gets in my way."

When Gene left the judge's house, the storm had grown worse. Rain fell in sheets while lightning licked the sky. All the way home, she shuddered. ST



CHARLES A. PETERSON

In almost every aspect of his life—formal education, professional experience, and recreation—Charles Peterson has been involved in writing and editing. He's written articles and news stories for newspapers, radio plays for broadcasting stations, and short stories and articles for magazines too numerous to mention. He's also been involved in radio and TV commercials and promotional films. His short stories and humor articles have appeared in six anthologies.

In AUGIE AND THE RUBY SLIPPERS we meet reformed cat burglar Augie Augenblick and several even stranger characters. If the ghost of Grandpa Potts doesn't get you, you may die laughing anyway.

AUGIE AND THE RUBY SLIPPERS

The judge says, "Case dismissed!" with a rap of his gavel—which is about all he can do, since my alibi for the theft of the Frobisher antique coin collection is provided, however grudgingly, by Detective Sergeant Mike Zeprowski himself. At the time someone is tapping the Frobisher till, he testifies, he is keeping an eye on me throughout a Bucks basketball game, in case I am planning to make off with the backboards and hoops during halftime. I have previously informed him, of course, of my intent to retire the jersey of Kit the Cat Burglar and have my rubber-soled shoes bronzed, but he, like some others on the force, is inclined to skepticism. So it is a good thing that he spies me in the medium-priced seats at that game, and even better that he is an honest cop who will speak up and say so at the preliminary hearing.

"Maybe next time, Kit," he says wistfully, as I make my way out of the courtroom.

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"Please!" I reply, offended. "Remember, I am now Citizen Augie Augenblick. The name of Kit the Cat will never darken your police blotter again."

He lifts an eyebrow. "Yeah, sure. I've seen these reform binges before. I'll bet it lasts until the next time you find yourself close to some sparklers somewhere—so just keep in mind that I've got an eye on you. When you slip, I'll land on you so hard you'll look like a waffle."

We part with expressions of restrained mutual esteem.

I am tripping down the marble corridors of the courthouse, pondering how one makes a living without climbing drainpipes and jimmying second-story windows, when someone plucks at my sleeve. I find myself staring into a large pair of brown feminine orbs, the most riveting feature of a generally nicely arranged face, complete with small whimsical nose, swirls of golden-brown hair, and a hopeful-looking smile.

"Mr. Augenblick?" asks the face.

"The same."

"I was in the courtroom just now when you were accused of stealing those coins. They said you were an expert burglar."

"*Were* is the operative word. I am now a retired-type person."

"Oh, I know! And it's wonderful! But I thought it was just possible you might be looking for a job. You may have heard of the Potts gem collection. . . ."

My initial thought, which was to demonstrate how easy it is to break the Olympic record for the hundred-meter disappearance, is followed by a second, which is that Detective Sergeant Zeprowski has devised some kind of trial by fire to test the purity of the Augenblick resolve. If this is the case, I owe it to myself to show him that said resolve is indeed fireproof.

"Tell me all," I say.

She does, over plastic cups of coffee from the courthouse canteen, beginning with the fact that she is Constance Potts,

niece of Jervis Potts, who is the present owner of the collection of jewels amassed by his grandfather, the late Ruthven Potts.

"I am also corresponding secretary of the Eulalie P. Ridley Reform Society," she goes on, batting those brown eyes, "which is devoted to the rehabilitation of unfortunates such as yourself. So when I saw you in court, it was as though a voice cried out, 'Connie, this is the very man Uncle Jervis needs to guard his collection!' You'll know just what needs to be done to protect it, you see."

I do see a certain logic in her approach, and it is not long before we arrange that I shall begin serving as security guard-chauffeur-handyman in the Potts household. It sounds as though it ought to beat climbing drainpipes. When I note Detective Sergeant Zeprowski dogging my footsteps as I leave the courthouse, I am happy to inform him that since I am now gainfully employed, he may take the rest of the decade off.

"Sure thing," he replies, pulling out his notebook. "But just let me have the address of that joint. In case one of the residents calls up and reports his back teeth missing, you understand."

Happily, Zeprowski is nowhere to be seen as I approach the Potts purlieu the next day. The house is an enormous, turreted, gabled, crenellated, towered, embrasured and ivy-smothered relic of the Victorian era, with a brooding porte cochere on one side and a surly looking greenhouse on the other. The place looks like something out of Transylvania, so I am not surprised when I am met at the servants' entrance by a spidery gent in black with a twitch in one eye, through which he examines me as though I am selling the bubonic plague house to house.

"Augie Augenblick here," I say.

"Ah!" he says, his worst suspicions apparently confirmed. "Come in. I am Smeagle, the butler, and this . . ." He indicates a figure stirring a soup kettle like one of Macbeth's witches. ". . . is Lucretia Swiggum, our cook."

Lucretia cackles a greeting and flings a few more bat wings and toad toenails into whatever she's brewing. Smeagle shows me to chauffeur's quarters located over the four-car garage, then takes me to meet Jervis Potts.

We find him in the library, a medium-sized chap in his late fifties with a trim mustache, high forehead and heavy-rimmed glasses, over which he peers at me as he dismisses the butler. He is wearing an ancient red smoking jacket with black lapels that looks as if it came with the house.

"Welcome, Mr. Augenblick—Augie," he says. "Connie has told me all about you. And your—er—previous career."

"Not to worry, Mr. P. That is a closed book."

"You're quite certain nothing will induce you to try a—shall we say—farewell performance?"

"Quite!"

"And there are no—er—professional acquaintances that you might be discussing our—er—arrangements with?"

"No, sir. I never mingled much, professionally."

"Ah!" Seemingly satisfied, he proceeds to open a small vault and to pull out several shallow drawers in which jewels gleam and glitter. "Well, here is Grandfather's collection—the ones you're supposed to guard. Pretty little things, aren't they?"

Uncle Jervis has a genius for understatement. I can think of several people who would gladly trade wives, loved ones, and a favorable parole board hearing for the contents of a single tray.

"This is the prize," he continues, hauling out a stone about the size of one of my goggling eyeballs. "The Rajasthan Ruby. He picked it up somewhere in India."

"Don't tell me, let me guess. There are a bunch of little dark-skinned men in white robes and sandals after it, to return it to some idol."

Uncle Jervis blinks, but before he can reply we are interrupted by some feminine chortling. Turning, I spy a little white-haired lady peering at us from the small balcony at one end of the library. "Tell him about the Doom, Jervis!" this person cries. "Tell him about the Doom!"

Uncle Jervis sighs. "That is Great-aunt Zuzu. She lives here."

"The Doom!" Great-aunt Zuzu insists.

She doesn't look like your usual neighborhood doomsayer, somehow. Her hair is expertly coiffed, her dress expensive-looking. Rings twinkle on her well-manicured hands, and she is wearing a mink stole that never came out of a thrift shop.

"Aunt Zuzu," says Uncle Jervis, "is in constant communication with Grandfather through her ouija board. And Grandfather threatens that anybody who tries to break up his jewel collection is going to come to a particularly revolting end. That's the Doom she's talking about."

"Doom awaits!" cries Aunt Zuzu in a sepulchral tone. She then adds matter-of-factly, "Here's the latest, Jervis. Came through only an hour ago, and I took it down just as Grandfather wrote it." She tosses down a piece of paper. Uncle Jervis picks it up, scans it, and hands it to me. It reads:

SCOFFERS WHOM DO NOT BELEIVE
SHALL ANON THE DOOM RECIEVE.

"Short and snappy," I observe, as Aunt Zuzu exits. "Was Grandfather by way of being a poet?"

"Grandfather was by way of being anything he felt like being. That's him over there," says Uncle Jervis, pointing to a life-size portrait hanging over the mantel. It is of a heavyset man with a bull neck, muttonchop whiskers, eyes like boiled onions, a jaw that suggests he eats nuts and bolts for breakfast, and an air that for two cents or less he would pound you two feet into the ground. I shudder involuntarily.

"Yes," says Uncle Jervis, answering my thought. "I feel sure Grandfather has his eye on us. He was the type of old-fashioned robber baron who felt the day was incomplete if he didn't corner gold or wheat or dispossess a covey of widows and orphans. On his off days, he barged about Europe and the East, browbeating jewels out of people. They're the only things he really went ape over, and even when he nearly went broke in the big panic, he wouldn't let loose of a single one."

"But. . . ."

"I know what you're thinking—what kind of Doom can you whip up with a batty old lady and a ouija board? The only trouble is—I've seen him!"

"You have?"

"Right here, one night after midnight. I was looking at the collection when suddenly I felt this cold wind on my neck and heard a kind of chuckle. I looked up at that balcony and there he was. Made the old hair stand on end, I tell you! I went to turn up the lights and then he was gone. Say what you will, I'm not about to irritate an aged relative who pops out of curtains and chuckles at you! However, . . ." He recovers himself with a little shake. ". . . now that you're here he should be satisfied. Any questions, Augie?"

"A couple. For instance, is it a good idea to keep the key to that vault hanging on a hook right beside it?"

"Psychology, dear boy! The devious criminal mind would never suspect anyone of leaving a key right beside the vault. Therefore, they'll look elsewhere."

"It wouldn't matter," I point out, "because this old lock can be opened with a piece of wire in about sixty seconds."

"Bless my soul!" says Uncle Jervis, his eyes widening. "Really?"

"And I notice you have no bars on the windows."

"There were some once. Made it difficult to wash the windows, so I had 'em taken off."

"I see. Well, if you'll just brief me on your alarm system. . . ."

"I don't trust alarm systems," says Uncle Jervis. "They're always short-circuiting or something. I feel much safer leaving everything in your hands, my boy. Let Smeagle know if there's anything you need."

I recognize dismissal in his tone, but before I can leave, the balcony curtains part and Aunt Zuzu is amongst us once again.

"A 'Stop Press' bulletin, Jervis," she says, tossing down another bit of paper. Uncle Jervis fields it neatly, reads it, and passes it over to me. This one reads:

BEWARE! YOUR NAFERIOUS
SCHEME IS DOOMED!

"What scheme?" Uncle Jervis demands.

Aunt Zuzu shrugs. "Don't ask me. Ask Grandfather. I'm off to my dancing class."

"Break a leg!" murmurs Uncle Jervis as she vanishes.

Outside of the sensation, fostered by Aunt Zuzu's communiqués from the beyond, that we are living on the slopes of an active volcano, I find life quite pleasant at the Potts manse. Aunt Zuzu is something of a recurrent pain in that she evidently thinks I am the focal point of whatever terrible vengeance Grandpa is concocting, although she still entrusts me with shopping lists to be filled at the supermarket or the nearby mall. True, I feel a certain reluctance to indulge in Lucretia Swiggum's cooking, as she manages to season everything with a Borgia-like zest. And it is mildly unsettling to find Smeagle padding about, one eye twitching, like an executioner who has mislaid his chopping block. Once or twice I notice a pair of big flat feet in the underbrush and find Mike Zeprowski attached thereto, looking disappointed at finding nothing more valuable than potting soil sticking to my fingers.

But all these are mitigated by the presence of Constance Potts. It seems her duties with the Eulalie P. Ridley Society aren't too demanding, for she often finds time to watch me washing the regal but ancient Cadillac or trimming the rose bushes, and she seems much interested in some of the capers of my pre-reform days. I find myself wondering what her reaction might be if I ask her to take in a movie or something. By and large, therefore, the casual observer would have to conclude that A. Augenblick has the world on a string.

Which is why I am more than somewhat unstrung when the Rajasthan Ruby turns up in my sock drawer one morning.

It happens that I am up early, well before dawn, with a splitting headache. The night before, I go to bed early, feel-

ing pretty much washed out, and spend a restless night with dreams in which voices keep urging me to snatch the gem collection. So the question that pounds in my brain as I stand there in the pre-dawn with this big ruby in hand is: Has A. Augenblick finally cracked up and taken to snatching sparklers in his sleep?

No answer immediately forthcoming, it appears the thing to do is replace it before anyone notices. No ex-cat burglar ever flitted through a sleeping household and down some back stairs more quietly than I. The library is a bit less than pitch dark, so it is the work of a moment to restore the ruby to the vault. I am preparing to flit back when I feel a cold draft on my neck. I turn just in time to catch a glimpse of a gray-white figure with muttonchop whiskers as it disappears behind the balcony curtain.

Up to this point, you understand, I have taken the yarn about Ruthven Potts' surveillance at something less than face value. But having seen the old boy himself, I am bound to reassess the situation. My nerves have barely stopped quivering when they begin again at the sight of Mike Zeprowski seated at the kitchen table, later that morning, swigging a cup of Lucretia's coffee.

He gives me a searching look and says, "You look like something the dog dug up and decided to rebury. What's the matter? Guilty conscience?"

"It's the strain of living a blameless life. What are you doing here?"

"Routine check. I heard some jewels might be missing."

"Are there?"

"No," says Zeprowski, regretfully.

Two nights later the scenario plays again, only this time the ruby has been slipped into the toe of a shoe. When I return it, I find one of Aunt Zuzu's messages lying on top of the vault. It says:

WE KNOW WHAT YOUR
UP TO. BEWARE.

By this time, I am beginning to wonder why I keep being

chosen for this hide-and-seek routine. And I'm getting rather curious about Grandpa Potts, who seems to be behind it all. When I notice on the library shelf an old book titled *My Days in Wall Street,* by Ruthven Potts, I ask Uncle Jervis if I may peruse same.

"Peruse?" he echoes, with a mirthless laugh. "Dear boy, would you like your own copy? Grandfather left fifteen hundred of them up in the attic!"

I can see why it never became a best seller. There is probably a limited market for a book full of information on how to put one over on J. P. Morgan, bribe stock commissioners, and drive competitors bankrupt—all couched in sentences that wander into lush undergrowths of verbiage. He mentions in a pleased way that he was occasionally referred to as "Ruthless Ruthven," but says nothing about why parts of his gem collection keep turning up in my room.

It is a pitch-black three A.M. the following morning when I awake to the click of my door latch. I slide cautiously out of bed to see who might be calling, but by the time I reach the door, the outer hall is empty. The ruby blinks at me from the top of my dresser, in the quick glow of my flashlight. Here we go again.

I exchange my pajamas for a black running suit and jacket, but before I step into the hall I am stopped by a soft sound from outside my window. A couple of figures are whispering together in front of the garage doors below, and one of them is shaped very much like Mike Zeprowski. Presently, they fade into the black, while I tell myself this has all the earmarks of a nasty development. So instead of traveling via the hallway, I decide on the overland route. It takes me out the window, up on the garage roof to the roof of the main house, across to the downspout outside the library, and down to one of those unbarred windows. It occurs to me that this is the first time I have ever broken into a house to put something back, wondering if Zeprowski would find this droll, too.

I replace the ruby and prepare to return to my room, when a couple of obstacles crop up. First, there is that cold

sensation I had once before, and the figure of Ruthven Potts materializes on the balcony. And second, as I peek out the window, I see there is now a police car sitting outside. Then, just to frost it all, there is a rattle at the library door.

Glancing up at the balcony, I see that Grandpa has disappeared, so I figure I am better off taking my chances in that direction than with Mike Zeprowski, whom I suspect of being on the other side of that door. There is an old high-backed chair under the balcony, high enough to give me a handhold on the balcony rail itself. I haul myself up and nip under the curtain as the library door opens, the lights blaze on, and Zeprowski lunges in shouting, "Freeze!"

Everything obediently freezes while he looks about with a puzzled expression. Uncle Jervis and Constance enter, wrapping bathrobes about themselves.

"Well, officer?" says Uncle Jervis.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone here," says Constance.

"I see that," says Zeprowski, sourly. "We got a tip that somebody was planning to steal some ruby tonight. Mind checking it out for me?"

Uncle Jervis opens the vault and pulls out the tray with the Rajasthan Ruby. "Still there," he observes.

Zeprowski's look of puzzlement deepens. "Maybe I should search Kit's—I mean, Augenblick's—room."

"What for?" says Constance. "You haven't a search warrant, and the ruby is right where it belongs."

"Yeah," says Zeprowski. "Well. . . ."

"Feel free to drop in anytime," says Uncle Jervis.

"Yeah," mutters Zeprowski again, and departs.

Uncle Jervis and Constance are disposed to linger. He moves to a small cabinet, takes out a couple of brandy snifters and a bottle, and pours a short one for each of them. They sip in silence, then heave simultaneous sighs.

"Well, that's that, I guess," says Uncle Jervis.

"I suppose so," sighs Constance.

"I thought when we introduced an experienced burglar to this house he would inevitably make off with those dratted jewels, if only as a matter of professional pride."

"How was I to know he'd really reformed? Anyway, he's rather a dear. I'm glad he didn't succumb to temptation."

"Sure, sure! So instead of collecting the insurance, I'm still stuck with a batch of cursed rocks and a monstrosity of a house that eats up every nickel of my income!"

"Well, I'm not so certain it would fall on Augie alone, anyway. Grandpa would probably regard you as an accessory."

Uncle Jervis shudders. "I thought it was a chance worth taking." At this point, I decide I have heard enough. "Hey!" I say, emerging from the balcony curtains.

Glasses leap from hands, brandy splashes on the floor, and voices cry, "Augie!" in two-part harmony as I swing down to floor level.

"My word, but you're an agile chap!" says Uncle Jervis admiringly, when he finds his voice.

"Never mind that!" I reply, putting a good deal of snap into it. "Do you mean to tell me you hired me hoping I'd heist those jewels of yours?"

Uncle Jervis toys with the sash of his robe in an embarrassed manner. "It was the only way I could think of to avoid Grandfather's curse. Sorry if we misjudged you."

"I can understand that. What I can't understand is your slipping that big ruby into my room night after night. I didn't think you'd stoop to framing me!"

Constance and Uncle Jervis exchange looks. They both firmly deny ever having planted the Rajasthan Ruby on me or, for that matter, tipping off Zeprowski that I might have it. I think this over briefly.

"In that case," I say, "I advise you to sell the thing."

Uncle Jervis draws a deep breath. "But Grandfather's curse . . ." he begins, then breaks off as I pull a roll of paper from under my jacket. "What's that?"

"Something I found in the balcony just now. I think it's your curse."

It unrolls to a full-length black-and-white picture of Ruthven Potts, identical to the mantel portrait. "There's a shop down in the mall that makes these poster-size blowups. I expect the other half of the curse is up in the balcony right

now. Come out, Aunt Zuzu!"

She steps out from the curtains. "Just wait till I get back to my ouija board!" she fumes. "Grandfather will have something to say about this!"

"Be sure to ask him how come a man who can write an autobiography in perfect English is as lousy a speller in his ouija board messages as you are on your shopping lists. You not only made up those warnings, but Grandpa's ghost as well—just by dangling this photo off the balcony when the library was so dark that nobody could really tell what it was."

"But that cold wind!" says Uncle Jervis. "I couldn't have imagined that!"

"Another thing I noticed up there was a thermostat in the corridor outside the balcony. All she had to do was switch on the air conditioning and the blower for a few minutes."

"Aunt Zuzu, is this true?" Uncle Jervis barks, but her expression is all the answer he needs. "There's really no curse on the collection? I can really go ahead and sell it? But why all this . . . this . . . ?" He gestures to the blowup of Grandpa.

"I'm afraid," I put in, "it's because Aunt Zuzu didn't want you to discover that she's been dipping into the collection herself, replacing the real gems with imitations. At least half of them look rather dubious to me. It's been keeping her in those expensive outfits and hair-dos and dancing lessons. Right, Aunt Zuzu?"

"And would have gone right on if it weren't for you!" she snaps. "It's too bad that policeman couldn't have caught you with the ruby!"

"*You* were the one who kept putting it in my room? How come I never heard you sneaking in?"

"It wasn't me; it was Smeagle. He and Lucretia helped me. He put the ruby in your room; she put the Numb-O in your gumbo, to make sure you slept well. Overdid it, I suppose. She always overdoes the seasonings."

"That's why I kept waking up early, with headaches."

"Well, this is a fine how-de-do!" growls Uncle Jervis, who seems somehow to have grown taller in the past few mi-

nutes. "Aunt Zuzu, I'll figure out what to do about you and Smeagle and Lucretia later!"

"Oh, Augie, you were wonderful!" purrs Constance, engulfing me with those big brown eyes.

Aunt Zuzu retires with a defeated air, only to reappear a second later. "Jervis!" she wails. "Does this mean I'll have to cancel my next dancing class? We're supposed to learn the Leaping Lena!"

"Zuzu, go to your room!" thunders Uncle Jervis. ST

SHERLOCK BONES

Dr. Lawrence Angel, 68, curator of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., is also known as Sherlock Bones.

By studying human bone chips, Dr. Angel can identify the age, stature, pregnancies (if any), race, sex, eating history, birth defects (if any), and body build of the deceased. His testimony has helped put eleven killers in prison.

Examining the skull and bones found on a golf course in Newark, Delaware, Dr. Angel concluded that wear patterns on the pelvis indicated the victim had frequently participated in sports, and that knobby bumps on the jaw meant the victim had strong jaw muscles. Further investigation determined that the victim played a musical instrument, was between 19 and 21 years of age, and had been strangled with a double noose of wire. His testimony led to the conviction of David Dutton, currently serving a life sentence for murder.

In 1976, while cooperating with the Pensacola, Florida, police department on a murder case, Dr. Angel's investigation was so complete that he was able to detect that the victim had worked as a waitress and had suffered from hookworm. His evidence resulted in a confession from the killer, who was sent to prison for 20 years.

Harry Squires

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J. F. PEIRCE

"Frank" Peirce is notable for his audacious humor and colorful characters. This is especially evident in "The 39-Cent Theft," which appeared in the new SAINT Magazine's premier issue. Here the humor, though a touch bawdy, is just good fun.

But in THE CONTRACT, though he retains his charming wit and sharply etched characterizations, Peirce adds another, more sobering element—biting irony.

THE CONTRACT

I awoke to sunlight sneaking between the blinds. My husband was hovering over me, a silly grin on his face. I pushed against the mat of golden curls on his chest and said, "Whoa, Tiger! Back off! Down, boy! I've got to get the kids off to school, you off to work."

His grin widened, and he said, "Happy twenty-ninth birthday, darling."

"My birthday's not for two weeks," I protested, coming completely awake.

"I know. But I can't wait to give you your present."

Neither of us had much of a childhood, and in many ways Tiger's still a little kid. That's why I love him.

Tiger handed me a crudely wrapped gift. Obviously, he'd wrapped it himself. There was more tape than paper. Gift wrapping's not one of his talents.

I stripped away the wrapping, fighting the tape all the way, opened the box, and stared at the gift blankly before recognizing what it was. Then I understood why he'd wrapped it himself.

"Oh, Tiger," I said, a catch in my voice, "it's what I've always wanted—a silencer for my automatic!"

© 1984 by J. F. Peirce

I was having a second cup of coffee, two hours later, when the phone rang.

Tiger had just taken the kids to school with notes saying that our alarm hadn't gone off and we'd overslept. Fortunately, the kids had.

I answered the phone.

A woman's shrill voice said, "When can we meet? And where? I want to put out a contract!"

I recognized the voice despite its shrillness, probably because of it, and almost dropped the receiver.

"Meet me at the bus stop at 4th and Elm in half an hour," I said. "There's a bench there where we can talk—without being overheard."

The phone clicked in my ear.

She was sitting on the bench when I arrived. There was no one else around.

I hadn't seen her for years, but she hadn't changed. She was still big-bosomed and blowsy. Her face was a pancake-makeup mask, crowned with brass-colored curls.

Before I could say anything, she began, "You're a hit man!" It was a statement, not a question.

"*Please,* no sexist language," I said, correcting her. "I'm a *hit person.*"

"I want you should hit Jake for me," she said. "How much is the contract?"

"I usually charge $5,000," I said, "but since Jake's the target, I'll do it cheap. Say a grand."

"Don't do me no favors," she said. "I'll pay the full price. It'll be a pleasure."

"Why do you want me to hit him?"

"Two days ago he defied me! He actually defied me! Besides, I've hated the bum for thirty years—ever since he got me pregnant and we had to get married."

"You don't understand," I said. "Why *me?* Why don't you get someone else to hit him?"

She smiled, and I shivered.

"Why *not* you?" she demanded. "You know him. There

won't be no mistake. It seems fitting."

In spite of myself, I nodded, then said, "When do you want it done?"

"Tonight. Right after seven. I'll leave the money in the mailbox. Be sure to turn off the lights before you leave."

"Why? Have you gotten as cheap as he is?"

"No. I've invited Mrs. Houlihan from next door to supper. We'll leave to play bingo just before seven and get home after eleven. If the lights are out, it'll look like Jake's gone to bed, and she'll invite me in for a drink—since I had her to supper. Afterwards, when I go home, I'll turn on the lights, discover Jake's body, and run back to her house screaming—have *her* call the police."

I nodded. She had it all figured out. "So *that's* why you've waited two days to put out a contract. It's taken you that long to come up with an alibi. Mrs. Houlihan can testify as to the time you ate, and that Jake was alive and kicking when you left. The autopsy'll prove he was killed long before you got home."

She smiled at my recognition of her cleverness.

"How'd you know I was a hit person?" I asked.

"Al told us." Al's one of my satisfied customers. "Al and Jake are friends. He borrowed the money from Jake to pay you. Jake made him tell why he wanted it before he'd lend him anything."

"I'll bet he did. And at only twenty percent interest—since he's a friend."

"Twenty-five percent. Jake had to go up on his rates because of inflation."

I stood, preparing to leave.

"One other thing," she said, her voice rising shrilly. "Before you hit him, I want you should tell him it's from me. Tell him Sarah sent you."

I got dressed to go out.

Tiger was helping the kids with their homework at the kitchen table. "Where to?" he asked.

"To try out my birthday present."

He looked pleased. Proud.

I parked the car two blocks away on a side street. I was wearing a tailored black pants suit, a belted black raincoat, and a mannish black hat. In the darkness, if anyone saw me, he (or she) would take me for a man.

The money was in the mailbox. I didn't take any chances. I counted it with the aid of my penlight. It was all there.

Jake took his own sweet time answering the door after I punched the button. He opened it a crack and peered out.

I didn't expect him to greet me with open arms, and I wasn't disappointed. We'd met and talked for all of two minutes two days before. He'd been none too friendly then.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, once he realized who I was. "Well, don't stand there like a dummy! Come in!"

Once inside, I wasted no time in delivering Sarah's message.

"Sarah sent me," I said, letting him get a good look at my automatic before I squeezed off a shot.

The silenced automatic made a soft, satisfying *"sput."*

I could hear Sarah's shrill voice as she told Mrs. Houlihan good-night.

Moments later, she opened the door and switched on the light, her mouth open, ready to scream. But when she saw me sitting in Jake's comfortable old chair, she shut her mouth so hard her false teeth clicked.

"What are *you* doing here?" she demanded. "Didn't you do the job?"

"The body's in the kitchen," I said. "I didn't want to get blood on the rug. I did it just like you told me. I said, 'Sarah sent me,' and showed him the gun."

"Then why are you here? You've spoiled everything. Like always!"

"Jake took out a contract on you two days ago, after your quarrel. This is the first chance I've had to deliver. *He* took the discount I offered."

Mom's eyebrows shot up. Just like Dad's. ST

JOE L. HENSLEY

Joe Hensley finds time for his fine, imaginative writing despite his pressing duties as a circuit court judge. In this second story of the Cannert saga, our "hero" continues as the SEARCHER for his missing wife, once again crossing paths with less-than-honorable citizens in the process—especially one armed with a whole factory full of high-tech devices. . . .

SEARCHER

Cannert lay ill on the couch in his recently rented apartment. Through the big window, he could see Davisson's modest house with its attached garage. The garage door was up, and the red pickup truck was gone.

Cannert considered checking the house again, if and when he felt better, but he'd found nothing before and he doubted anything had changed. Davisson was as wary as a fox and might have detected the last entry. He could be watching and waiting for another. The police had jailed Davisson but were unable to hold him. Cannert sighed and continued to watch.

The doctor came. He checked Cannert over with expert fingers.

"I seldom make house calls," he said, smiling down at Cannert. "Doctors don't have to in Florida, but you interest me. You're sick, but you refuse to go to the hospital or come to my office. I ask myself why. How long did your people up north give you?"

"A year at the outside. That was more than seven months ago."

The doctor nodded soothingly. "Maybe you've got a bit more time than that. You're not swollen. I see no radical changes. Sometimes there are small remissions." He shook

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his head. "I'm not promising you a thing, but it could be. I think you're nauseous because you're not eating right. What have you had today?"

Cannert told him. The list was short.

The doctor scribbled out a prescription. "Take these before meals, and try to eat regularly. Stay away from fried and high fat foods." He looked sternly down at Cannert. "And come in the next time you need me. I'd like to do some X-rays." He searched through his case and handed Cannert a bottle of large tablets. "These are nonprescription. Chew up one or two with half a glass of water when you feel nauseous. They're only flavored chalk, but they'll help. You can buy more in any drugstore."

"Thanks, doctor," Cannert said humbly.

When the doctor had gone, Cannert managed to get up. He felt weak and his stomach churned, but he found he could walk. He went to the tiny kitchen, got a glass of water, and chewed one of the big tablets. It tasted sweet and chalky. In a while he felt better.

He drove to a drugstore and got the new prescription filled. He took one of the new capsules, added a pain pill, and then ate a ham sandwich at the drugstore lunch counter. By the time he was finished, he felt much better.

He listened to the chatter of the ancients around him. Centralia was an old-folks' town, inland from the warm sea, cheaper than the ocean cities. People vacationed and moved here to sit vacant-eyed in the sun, to play golf and shuffleboard—perhaps, eventually to die.

Cannert thought it was the kind of town Martha would have liked.

In the newspapers he had scanned in his travels, Cannert had read reports indicating that a lot of old people had disappeared from Centralia. A later story mentioned that a Lieutenant Ryan was in charge of the missing persons cases, and that an Alfred Davisson had been picked up for questioning and later released.

So Cannert had come to Centralia looking for clues to the

whereabouts of Martha, his wife, who'd traveled to Florida seeking a place for them, then vanished. Centralia was somewhere to look while time ran on out. *Keeping busy.*

At five that afternoon, Cannert walked into the Precinct Bar and Grill, across the street from the police station. He took a seat at the far end of the bar, ordered a Canadian and water, tipped adequately but not munificently, and waited. He'd been in the place twice before, and a few regulars gave him tentative nods. He nodded back.

Ryan sat three seats down from him. Cannert ignored the man for the moment. Another bar regular, a red-nosed patrolman who didn't like Ryan, had told him about Ryan's problems. Drinking had cost him his wife and probably any chance for further advancement as a policeman.

Six o'clock came. Much of the bar crowd had moved on. A few couples came in and took booths before ordering drinks and dinner. Cannert motioned to the bartender. "See if I might buy Lieutenant Ryan a drink," he said.

Ryan looked up at him curiously and nodded. Cannert walked over and took an adjoining stool.

"I still do a little free-lancing for some papers up north. I'm down here on vacation, and I've read about all your missing people. I thought it might make a story. How many are missing?"

"No one's sure. Twenty. Maybe more. Old people flit in and out of Centralia like summer moths. Some I think are missing probably aren't. Some I don't list as missing maybe are."

He sipped the drink Cannert had bought him. "I doubt I could do you any good. We had a guy we watched and then picked up, but nothing came of it. Alfred Davisson. He's a bug. He was seen with a couple of people who later turned up missing." Ryan smiled without humor. "When his lawyer got him out, Davisson sued me for false arrest. Then he sued me and the town again because we kept watching him. The local powers didn't like that, or me for causing it. I got told to stop. So I stopped. Guys like Davisson should

die hard, but I guess they won't in today's world."

"You're pretty sure he was involved?"

Ryan shrugged. "Maybe."

"You said he was a bug. What does that mean?"

"It means he's wacky. His elevator doesn't go to the top floor. If we let Davisson do the deciding, retired old people wouldn't come here to Centralia. He wants building stopped—and no more roads. But mostly, no more people. He files lawsuits against anything and everything. He's a great law man." Ryan grinned. "He ain't popular. But he has a following of sorts. Other kooks."

"What's he do for a living?" Cannert asked.

"Works at the biscuit place. He's the head man. Good enough job, I'd guess. Better than mine." He peered into his drink as if seeking answers there. "They don't work no more than six or eight people out there these days. Everything's automated." He looked Cannert over carefully. "You kind of look like a bug, too."

"How's that?"

"Too thin and tired. Your eyes are old. Did you maybe used to be a cop?"

"No. It could be newspaper reporting is the same kind of thing," Cannert said, not liking the man's acuteness.

"Maybe so," Ryan said, losing interest. He looked down at his almost empty glass. "I had a hunch on Davisson. I did the natural thing. I picked him up. He called his lawyers, and the town and I got sued. Nuisance stuff, but the people I work for don't like nuisances." He tapped Cannert on the arm. "So I don't like Davisson." He tinkled his ice impatiently.

Cannert nodded again to the bartender.

The "biscuit place" turned out to be a dog biscuit factory. Cannert drove his Ford past it the next afternoon. It sat aloofly behind a high fence on a large lot at the edge of town. A bored, uniformed guard stood at the wide front gate. Davisson's red pickup truck was one of about half-a-dozen vehicles parked in a small lot.

The building was long and gray. The only windows Cannert saw were near the top. A single door opened from the parking area. A well-painted sign on one side of the structure read: "Bowser's Bone Food—For Discriminating Dogs."

Cannert drove on around, taking a graveled, tree-lined road. On the far side of the building, he could see a loading dock. A few men worked there, piling cartons into trucks.

As Cannert watched from concealment, two more big trucks entered the grounds. The driver of the first one got out, nodded a greeting to the men working on the dock, and pressed a button on a shiny pole. A large metal cover lifted smoothly from the ground. He reentered his cab and backed up to the hole which had been exposed. Stepping down once more, he removed chains and a tarpaulin from the vehicle's rear.

Cannert saw animal carcasses that looked freshly killed. He thought some of them were cattle, some hogs. The man attached ropes and hooks to the carcasses. They were lifted from the truck and then lowered into the hole. When the first vehicle was unloaded, the second one backed in. This time the cargo was grain of some kind.

Davisson came out and stood overseeing the operations from a raised area on the loading dock. Cannert watched him through binoculars and felt the hair along the back of his neck raise, his blood run faster. This could be the man who'd gotten Martha. Cannert felt it was. Martha's last card had come from not very far away.

Davisson was strongly built, maybe late forties or early fifties, balding. His eyes were cruel and shifty.

Cannert stayed out of sight and observed the proceedings throughout the long, hot afternoon. At five, the other men left, but Davisson remained. At seven, Davisson came out, got in his pickup, and maneuvered it to the gate. He unlocked the gate, drove through, then locked it again. Cannert watched him leave but continued waiting. In a while, the red pickup came back past the plant, slowed, then moved on after Davisson had taken a long look. *A wary fox,* Cannert thought again.

Cannert extracted the little Hy Hunter Derringer .38 from his Ford's glove compartment and walked along the back fence of the plant. He found he was trembly and ill again, so he chewed two more of the big, white tablets. They helped, even without water.

Halfway along the fence, there was a place where heavy rain storms had cut a depression beneath it. A large man couldn't have squeezed under, but Cannert managed easily.

The doors along the loading dock were secured, and so was the front entrance. The windows were too high to allow easy entry. Cannert prowled on, then remembered the deliveries of the afternoon.

He found and pressed the button on the pole and watched the cover lift slowly from the ground. He clambered down the rungs of a metal ladder into the murky interior of the exposed cavity before stopping to let his eyes adjust to the deeper darkness. On this subterranean level, he found an inner door that opened off into an area beneath the gray building. He pushed through.

There was a strong smell of dead animals and feed grains. Cannert felt his way along a dusty corridor, found some stairs, and went up. On the floor above, the air was cooler. He moved past complex machines and huge vats, some of them bubbling with heat. Relays clicked on and off. Motors whirred softly. Cannert inspected it all, taking his time.

At the front of the building, he discovered what he soon decided was Davisson's office. It lay behind a sturdy, but unlocked, steel door. Inside, there was an impressive array of panels, switches, and complicated gauges, with red and green lights blinking at the bidding of a nearby computer.

In the half light, Cannert found Davisson's desk and chair. Papers were strewn about the top. When Cannert held them closer to the red and green lights, he found that all of them were business letters or order forms. He put them back where they'd been.

The desk drawers were locked. It seemed like a dead end. Cannert headed for the door and then turned to take a last look. In one corner a heavy wooden chair, worn and

scarred, caught his eye. It was the room's only additional seating. Cannert walked over and explored it with his fingers, discovering a small opening between chair seat and chair bottom. An idea and a hunch came at the same time.

He took the derringer out of his pocket and pushed it into the recess. It fit snugly, out of sight. He considered the situation carefully, finally deciding to leave it there. If he was wrong about Davisson, losing the gun was a small price to pay. But if he was right, the hidden weapon could be invaluable.

He left the plant as he'd entered it, closing the metal cover behind him.

For nine days, Cannert kept watch on the factory and on Davisson's house. Several times, at the house, people came and went. Once, some kind of meeting was held. A tall man in a black coat gave some kind of blessing to begin it. People got up and talked heatedly while Davisson nodded in agreement from a front table. At one point, bumper stickers were passed out. Cannert later saw Davisson attach one to his truck. It read: "Florida for Floridians—Others Stay Out."

Cannert felt good again. His appetite returned as he maintained his vigil.

On the tenth night, something happened which Cannert had been expecting. He saw Davisson turn out his lights and slip from the house. He was carrying a package.

Cannert got to his own vehicle as quickly as he could, panting a little, tired by the time he arrived. He waited until he saw Davisson's pickup exit his driveway, then followed as Davisson drove to the main highway, toward the biscuit plant. Seizing an opportunity, Cannert passed the red truck, cutting Davisson off. Hearing the pickup's horn blare angrily, he raised a placating hand, wanting to be noticed.

When he was five hundred yards ahead, Cannert pulled off the road and popped his hood release. He got out and stood beside the apparently disabled car.

The truck's lights picked him up. Cannert knew Davisson was seeing Illinois plates and the wasted old body of an

"outsider."

The red pickup sped on past. Cannert felt his heart slow as the gamble failed. Then, at the next crossroad, he saw brake lights come on. The truck made a U-turn, then another before it stopped behind Cannert's Ford. Davisson got out.

"Problems?" he asked politely.

"Guess this car's just getting old, like me," Cannert responded. "I passed you and it just quit. Fate maybe. Could I get you to drop me at a service station?"

"Sure," Davisson answered easily. He smiled, but the smile never touched his eyes. The man was even larger up close than at a distance. Formidable.

Cannert climbed into the cab of the red truck.

"New around here?" Davisson asked.

"Just moved into Centralia a few weeks back. No relatives left. I needed to find someplace warm. Sure is that here. And it's less expensive than the ocean cities. I guess I also like fresh water fishing better than salt."

Davisson nodded. "I have to make a stop first. I manage a factory that makes animal food, mostly dog biscuits. I need to check something there."

"You're kind to a stranger," Cannert said, smiling. "A lot of folks down here in Florida have been. Sure makes me glad I came." He sighed. "Someone's still on my side, I guess."

Davisson nodded in the half darkness.

At the plant, Davisson opened the gate, drove through, then got out and relocked it.

"Company regulations," he explained.

He parked in front of the building. From the bed of the truck he got his package and then leaned in Cannert's window.

"Come in and take a look. It's mostly dials and switches and the like, but you might find the automation interesting. During the day I've got men who help, but I could do it all myself if I really had to."

Cannert obediently followed Davisson inside. Once they

were in the office, Davisson's demeanor changed from accommodating to commanding.

"Sit there in that chair, old man. Tell me exactly where you're from and why you came to Centralia. And don't lie. I think I've seen you in my neighborhood."

Cannert gave him a surprised, frightened look. "I've already told you. I came down from Chicago. I don't remember ever seeing you before, sir."

"I've seen you," Davisson said, unconvinced. "Tell me or I'll make you sorry."

"I'm already sorry," Cannert said.

"You say you don't have any relatives or friends here?"

"No. None. Maybe there's a few folks I've met in bars or at the dog track." He gave Davisson an uneasy, concerned look. "If you want my money, I'll give it to you."

"I'll take it anyway, for the cause," Davisson said coolly. "No hurry. Do you know anything about animal foods?"

"No, sir."

"They're made from grains, mostly corn. Then there's bone meal, chicken, beef, pork. Our brand sells good because it has more meat and bone content than most. Out there in the plant there are machines that grind and mix, form, then cook and bake. I'm going to slip you into one of those machines, old man, and in about five hours you'll be in a sack. Your bones and your body will be ground down and cooked under pressure, mixed with thousands of pounds of other meat and grains. You'll be worth more then than now."

"You're joking," Cannert said softly.

"No. I don't joke." Davisson pointed. "I'll just drag you out to the first machine beyond that wall," he said, enjoying Cannert's discomfort. "There's a hoist I can use to haul you up and in. That machine cooks hot. I like to put you old ones inside it while you're still alive. I can watch what happens through a thick window in the front."

"I read something in the paper," Cannert said emptily. "I almost didn't come here because of it. You've done this before."

"Lots of times." Davisson smiled. "My company pays me bonuses for efficiency. I hate all you old ones."

Cannert sat quietly, feigning stunned disbelief.

Davisson continued, warming to his oratory. "I read the other day where people moving into Centralia had slowed way down. I guess I caused some of that. You should have gone elsewhere.

"Before I put you in the machine, I'm going to do some unpleasant things. They'll hurt a lot, but it'll be over soon enough, and I'll find out all there is to know about you. Then, when you're in the machine, I'll press these buttons here, one every time the light above it turns green. In less than five hours, you'll be part of our best and most expensive dog food."

He glanced over at the board, calculating. "Your bag numbers should start at about 6,150,200 and run on for five or six hundred bags. Tomorrow, they'll load you out to market."

"Those buttons there?" Cannert asked, as if not comprehending.

"Yes," Davisson answered, opening his package. Inside, there was a new rope, a long, iron rod, and an evil-looking whip. "I went prowling tonight and found you."

"My wife vanished down around here," Cannert said. "Large woman, gray hair, driving a '76 Plymouth with Illinois plates."

Davisson shrugged. "Too damn many of you. Too many. I hate you all. Too much blacktop, too many interstates, condos, apartments, motels. But I'll stop it."

"Do you remember her? Did you bring her here?"

"I don't know. I don't particularly remember her, but if I did, you'll soon join her." He smiled grimly. "It's going to start happening now." He picked up the iron rod. Cannert saw that it was cruelly barbed. "We'll start with this."

Cannert rose to his feet.

"Stay in that chair," Davisson ordered.

Cannert saw that the man wasn't, at the moment, completely sane. "Could I kneel and say a final prayer?"

Davisson considered the request. "You can pray only if

you pray to me, old man. There's no room for other deities here."

"To you, then," Cannert nodded. He slid off the chair onto his knees. For a moment, his body hid his hands. It was enough.

From a busy post office in Tampa, three weeks later, Cannert sent Davisson's driver's license to Lieutenant Ryan, c/o the Precinct Bar and Grill. He mailed it with two sacks—which were partly dogfood, partly Davisson. ST

VILLAIN

Over the centuries, the term *villain* has meant different things to different peoples. In the beginning, the word was innocent enough. It was used to describe a person who lived on a Roman farm, or villa. By the thirteenth century, it was the general term for any lowborn rustic. Later, when it passed from Old French into modern English, the term *villain* was used to describe any rural person.

Many early *villains* were serfs whose lot was so hard they had little to lose by breaking the law and being punished. The prevalence of petty crime among such farm workers caused the entire class to be labeled as would-be lawbreakers. The natural next step was to call all criminals and persons with antisocial tendencies *villains,* no matter whether they lived in the city or on the farm.

As late as the sixteenth century, peasant farmers were still called *villains,* no matter how harmless they were. But with the breakdown of feudalism, the rural application of the word lost its meaning. It came to be used exclusively as a term for a knave, scoundrel, or criminal.

Marvin Vanoni

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RICHARD DEMING

The late, and much admired, Richard Deming was a thoroughly professional and versatile author. Although his writing output included a few books covering other spheres of interest, he is principally known as a writer of crime fiction, his long career having begun during the latter days of the pulp magazine era.

In the crime field, he has written numerous novels, short stories, and novelizations of original TV series, including Dragnet, The Mod Squad, Starsky and Hutch, Vegas, *and* Charlie's Angels. *His best-known series detective is Manville "Manny" Moon, a hard-boiled private eye.*

Deming's crisp dialogue and believable characters are but two of the elements that make his stories so appealing. The FRIENDLY WITNESSES in this tale are also charming—and unswerving in their dedication to see justice done in the murder of their friend. Makes you want to stand up and cheer.

FRIENDLY WITNESSES

Sergeant Gunner wanted the three old people to wait at the morgue's front desk while he took Mrs. Worth to the viewing window.

"You'll have to go over to Homicide with me later," he said to the aged man and two aged women with the retirement home manager. "But all I need to make an identification is Mrs. Worth."

The manager of the Riverview Senior Citizens Retirement Home said, "They want to see Olivia, Sergeant. They were her best friends."

Sergeant Gunner didn't particularly care how many people viewed the body of old Mrs. Olivia Pritchard, but he was un-

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easy about elderly viewers. Over the years, he had piloted enough witnesses to the viewing window at the morgue to know the traumatic effect the sight of a body full of bullet holes could have. He didn't like the prospect of three visitors in their eighties keeling over from shock. But since they seemed determined to view the body, he couldn't bar them. Leading all four along the corridor to the viewing window, he moved the lever that parted the curtains.

Beyond the glass, the withered body of an old woman lay on a morgue cart. She was naked and the blood had been washed from her, but four puckered purplish-black holes across the chest and stomach showed how she had died.

In a faint voice Mrs. Worth said, "It's Olivia Pritchard all right."

Sergeant Gunner glanced at the three old people. Apparently, his worry had been needless. None showed emotion. Although sad, their expressions were curiously lacking in grief. It occurred to the homicide officer that after you pass eighty, death probably doesn't seem very tragic.

Anna Stenger, the oldest of the trio, was eighty-six. A retired schoolteacher, she was a straight-backed spinster with snapping black eyes and a birdlike manner of cocking her head to one side. Except for a face so wrinkled it resembled cracked parchment, she might have passed for sixty.

Mrs. Hester Lloyd, like the dead Mrs. Pritchard, was a widow. She was a pear-shaped little woman with a gentle smile and a nearsighted manner of peering over thick-lensed glasses. She was eighty-four.

Gerard Hawk, the youngest of the group, was eighty-one. Tall, stoop-shouldered, and beak-nosed, with curling white hair and a white handlebar mustache, he had clear blue eyes that were still strong enough not to require glasses. Mrs. Worth had told Gunner that he was a lifelong bachelor.

Closing the curtains, the homicide detective said, "Now, would you all please accompany me to Homicide?"

As Police Headquarters was only a half block from the Coroner's Court Building, they walked. Sergeant Gunner expected that he and Mrs. Worth would have to cut their

paces to accommodate the old people. Instead, they had to walk briskly to keep up.

As they fell a few steps behind, Mrs. Worth said, "They're going to miss Olivia. The four were inseparable."

When Sergeant Gunner only grunted, she said, "So many of our tenants are mentally slow — some even senile. Anna, Hester, and Mr. Hawk are still smart as whips, and so was Olivia Pritchard. They had nothing in common with most."

"I know," Gunner said. "When she came in to report seeing the Sloan Company bombing, there was nothing vague about her description of the suspect who tossed the bomb."

"You think it was this Nick Spoda person?"

"The description fits. We'd have a better case if we had caught him in time for her to make a positive identification." His expression turned glum. "I didn't think she was in danger, because we kept from the media the fact that we had her as a witness. I had no idea it had leaked to Spoda. If she had phoned me when Spoda called on her the day before yesterday, I would have put her in protective custody."

Mrs. Worth said, "I would have phoned you myself if I had known who the man was, but Olivia wasn't in the habit of confiding in me. She told Anna and Hester and Mr. Hawk, but I knew nothing about it until after she was dead. It didn't seem to occur to any of them that the police ought to be informed."

The three old people waited in front of Police Headquarters for Gunner and Mrs. Worth to catch up, and the five crossed the lobby together to take the elevator to the third floor. In the Homicide squad room, Sergeant Gunner briefed them on the situation.

"We figure this as a gang kill," he said. "With Mrs. Pritchard scheduled to testify against Spoda when we eventually caught him, it's pretty obvious she was gunned because she could identify him as the one who threw the bomb through the window of the Sloan Cleaning Company. But suspicion is not proof. Your testimony may make the difference between Spoda getting away with this raw deal and going to the gas chamber."

The white-haired and white-mustached Hawk said, "How could he get away with it, Sergeant? If I was on a jury in a case where the only witness against a gangster was shot down in broad daylight, I would figure either the gangster himself did it or had it done. Hardly likely anyone else would be gunning for a harmless woman like Olivia."

"It wouldn't be the first time a member of the Fallon gang got away with this raw a kill," Gunner said. "Not even the first time for Spoda."

Mrs. Worth said, "The Fallon gang?"

"A bunch of labor racketeers, headed by a crooked lawyer named Mark Fallon. Spoda is Fallon's top gun."

He had Nick Spoda brought in then. The old people showed no more emotion at the sight of the gunman suspected of murdering their friend than they had when they viewed Mrs. Pritchard's body. Gerard Hawk examined him with the clinical detachment of a biologist looking at a specimen under a microscope. Anna Stenger cocked her head to one side and stared at him with teacher-like disapproval. Hester Lloyd peered over her glasses at the swarthy gunman sorrowfully, as though she pitied him more, for his sins, than she censored him.

Nick Spoda sneered. "What's this, Sergeant? An old folks' convention?"

Ignoring him, Gunner said to Mrs. Worth, "Is this the man who came to see Mrs. Pritchard?"

"Yes," she said.

Still looking at the gunman while speaking to the retirement home manager, Gunner said, "But you weren't present when they talked?"

Mrs. Worth shook her head. "I left them alone in the parlor. All I can really testify to is that he did talk to her."

Gunner turned to the three old people. "None of you saw this meeting?"

All three shook their heads. Gerard Hawk said, "We all generally nap about that time of the afternoon, but she told us about it afterward."

"Just what did she tell you?"

Anna Stenger said, "He threatened her. He warned her not to identify him when she was brought to headquarters to look at him. Apparently he planned to turn himself in." Her voice took on a kind of grisly enjoyment. "I guess Olivia told him off good and proper. She wasn't one to hold her tongue."

Gunner said, "She told all of you this same story?"

The other two old people nodded. Hawk said, "We were all together when she told it."

Nick Spoda yawned. "Hearsay. Just think what Mark Fallon will do to that testimony."

Hester Lloyd peered over her glasses. "What's he mean by that?"

Nick himself answered her. "It ain't admissible evidence. Long as you didn't personally hear me say nothing to this Pritchard dame, it don't count. What somebody else told you I said ain't allowed in the court record. The most you people can prove is that I stopped off to see the old lady for a couple of minutes. So what? I heard she wanted to buy a dog, and I got one for sale."

His arrogant tone constituted a brazen admission that he had committed the crime, and an equally brazen challenge for Sergeant Gunner to prove it. Gerard Hawk studied the swarthy man, his expression curious.

He said, "You don't seem very scared, young follow."

Nick Spoda laughed.

The squad room door opened and three men walked in. In the vanguard was a well-dressed man of about forty, sleek and genial and assured. He made an impressive entrance, pausing just inside the door and smiling around generally before coming the rest of the way into the room. Behind him came two men with beefy physiques and sullen faces.

"Morning, Sergeant," the lead man said to Gunner. "Got a little piece of paper for you."

Gunner took the proffered paper and studied it. When he looked up, he said, "You didn't need a writ, Fallon. We had every intention of sticking your boy in front of a judge this

morning."

Mark Fallon cocked an eyebrow. "On what charge, Sergeant?"

"Suspicion of homicide. I think we have enough to get him remanded."

"What homicide is he suspected of?"

Sergeant Gunner looked irritated. "Don't cat-and-mouse me, Fallon. What's on your mind?"

Fallon smiled a genial smile. "As Nick's attorney, I'm entitled to know the charge. What homicide?"

When Gunner failed to answer, Nick said, "Some old dame named Pritchard, Mark. They claim I gunned her down on the street from a blue sedan at three o'clock yesterday afternoon. Down on South Broadway somewhere, a couple of blocks from the Riverview Old Folks Home."

"The Riverview Senior Citizens Retirement Home," Mrs. Worth corrected.

The lawyer's expression became one of mock surprise. "Three P.M.? It's lucky I happened to bring these two gentlemen along." He indicated his two silent companions. "They were with Nick across the river at the dog races from eleven A.M. until five-thirty P.M. Right, gentlemen?"

Both nodded without changing expression.

"There are other witnesses, too," Fallon said. "The boy Nick bought his admission ticket from, a fellow who sold him a hotdog, and a cashier at one of the betting windows. Can't see how you could establish Nick as anywhere but at the dog track at three yesterday."

Sergeant Gunner gazed at Fallon for a long time before saying, "You own stock in that track, don't you, Fallon?"

"Totally irrelevant, Sergeant. Shall we go see this judge you mentioned?"

Gunner said, "Murder isn't the only charge your boy faces. There's the little matter of flinging a grenade through a plate glass window."

"The Sloan Company bombing, you mean? You have a witness tying Nick to that?"

Sergeant Gunner continued to gaze at Fallon. Then sudden-

ly his expression wearied. He said, "I guess we better go see the captain."

Fifteen minutes later, Nick Spoda walked out of Police Headquarters a free man.

Sergeant Gunner didn't have much success explaining to Mrs. Worth and her three elderly tenants why the gunman was released, partly because he wasn't very happy about his own explanation.

"A writ of habeas corpus requires you either to release a suspect from custody or take him before a judge who has authority to set bond," he said. "In this case we knew there was no point in taking him before a judge because the judge would have to dismiss the charge."

"Even with our testimony?" plump little Mrs. Hester Lloyd asked.

"He has better testimony on his side," Gunner said. "All we could prove was that Spoda called on Mrs. Pritchard two days ago. His witnesses prove he was miles away when she was gunned. Even though we know they're lying, there's nothing we can do without counter witnesses placing him at the scene of the crime."

"But isn't Spoda the man Olivia identified as throwing that bomb?" Mrs. Lloyd persisted.

"She only gave us a description that fits Spoda. She never actually identified him, because she was dead when Spoda turned himself in."

"It's still obvious he's the killer. I mean, people like Olivia don't go around getting shot by just anyone. It seems to me that, like Mr. Hawk said, any jury would understand when a gangster has a motive to kill someone, he threatens her, and then she gets killed in a gangster way, he must be the killer."

"It has to be more than obvious," Gunner said. "You have to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt."

The straight-backed Anna Stenger said, "Aren't you going to do anything at all, young man? Just let him run loose to kill again?"

Sergeant Gunner said, "There isn't anything we *can* do."

The old ex-schoolteacher sniffed. "We didn't have that lack of justice when I was young, Sergeant. Criminals were punished."

Gerard Hawk said, "I guess it makes a difference who you are, Anna. I imagine that when ordinary people who haven't got gangs behind them commit murder, Sergeant Gunner takes them to court."

Gunner's face reddened. "What would you do if you were a cop, Mr. Hawk?"

The old man looked at him without any particular expression. "I was a cop once, Sergeant. But I guess things have changed since my day."

The sergeant became a little angry. "Maybe you didn't have the problems we have. You're right when you say I run ordinary people who commit murder into court. But you think I like watching a cheap hood like Nick Spoda walk out of here clean? You think he's the only killer who has? What's a cop supposed to do when an organized mob like the Fallon gang is willing to perjure itself down to the last man? I know Spoda killed your friend, but I couldn't prove it in court in a million years, so why waste my time trying?"

The old man said to Mrs. Worth, "I guess we've done all we can here."

Gunner glared at him. "You think I wanted to let that hood go?"

Hawk looked at him curiously. "Course not, Sergeant. I understand your technical reasons for turning him loose."

Courteously, he bent over the aged Anna Stenger and helped her to her feet. Then, as though in idle afterthought, he said, "Doesn't seem quite right there should be separate rules for gangsters and ordinary people, though. Wasn't when I wore a badge."

"How long ago was that?" Gunner asked.

The old man smiled. "Before you were born, Sergeant. Been retired over forty years."

Sergeant Gunner's primary reaction to the whole incident was frustration. He felt it unfair to be blamed for a situation beyond his control, yet at the same time he had to admit

there was justification for old Gerard Hawk's unconcealed contempt for the modern law enforcement system. Because the sergeant represented that system, the old man's attitude continued to rankle long after he and his companions had gone.

He was still feeling frustration when he logged in the following morning and received word that Nick Spoda had been shot dead the previous night. As a homicide cop, Gunner had a natural aversion to murder, but this killing actually gave him a lift.

"The call just came in," the captain said. "But the guy who called figures it must have happened last night. Manager of the hotel where Nick lived. Want to take it?"

"Naturally," Gunner said. "I want to pin a medal on the killer."

Nick Spoda's home had been the Midland Hotel, a respectable but inexpensive place on upper Grand Avenue. Gunner found a number of people awaiting him in the lobby.

There was the hotel manager, a nervous man who seemed more concerned about possible bad publicity for the hotel than he was disturbed by the death of a tenant. With him was a sleepy-eyed night clerk whom the manager had dragged from bed on the assumption that the police would want to talk to the man who had been on duty when the crime occurred. There was also a uniformed policeman, Mark Fallon, and the same two men who had accompanied him to headquarters the day before.

Mark Fallon seemed to be suffering from barely controlled rage. "We already know who did this, Sergeant," he said. "I would like to go along when you make the arrest."

Gunner eyed the lawyer with distaste. Had anyone else present announced that he knew the name of the killer, he would have asked for details before he did anything else. But Fallon aroused in him a desire to be contrary.

"Hold it until I'm ready for you," he said. He turned to the patrolman. "Where is it?"

"Second floor, Sarge. My partner's guarding the door."

Ordering everyone to wait in the lobby, Gunner climbed stairs to the second floor. Halfway along the hall, another uniformed policeman stood in front of a closed door. Several other doors were open, and tenants stood in them, curiously watching the patrolman.

In the room, Gunner found Nick Spoda sprawled on his back just outside the bathroom door, a single bullet hole in the center of his forehead. He was dressed, but the collar of his shirt was tucked in all around, and shaving cream had dried on his checks. A safety razor was gripped in his right hand.

It was apparent that someone had entered the room while Spoda was shaving. The gangster had stepped to the bathroom door to see who it was and had been shot.

"The manager says nothing's been touched," the patrolman said. "A cleaning maid discovered him about an hour ago, around eight. She didn't disturb anything, and the manager said he didn't even enter the room, just looked from the doorway."

Bending over the body, Gunner lifted the head enough to satisfy himself there was no exit wound. "Still in the head," he said, ostensibly to the patrolman, but really to himself. "Shouldn't be too mashed up for comparison purposes."

Rising, he went over the room quickly but thoroughly, finding nothing of interest. In the bathroom, he found a can of shaving cream on the washbowl counter and a couple of inches of soap-filmed water in the bowl.

Noting the sergeant's scowl, the patrolman said, "Nothing, huh?"

"The killer didn't leave any calling cards," Gunner said.

Instructing the guard to admit the lab man and photographer when they arrived, and release the body to the morgue as soon as they finished their work, he returned to the lobby. He addressed his first question to Mark Fallon.

"What are you doing here, counsellor?"

The lawyer said, "I had a golf date with Nick. When I walked in and learned what had happened, I stuck around. That old coot who was in your office yesterday killed him,

Sergeant."

When Gunner gave his eyebrows an inquiring hike, Fallon said, "I phoned Nick at seven-thirty last night to make our golf date. He told me old Hawk had just called and asked to come see him at eight-thirty. That's when he was shot."

Tabling him, Gunner turned to the hotel manager. "What's your name?"

"Thomas Bower."

"All right, Mr. Bower, tell me what you know."

He didn't know very much. Aside from having looked into Spoda's room long enough to assure himself the man was dead, he knew only what he had gotten from the night desk clerk. When he started to relay that, Gunner cut him off in favor of getting it from the source.

"You tell it," he said to the clerk.

The night clerk was a thin man in his twenties named Amuel Card. He said he lived at the hotel. He said he had heard a shot about eight-thirty the previous night, sounding as though it came from the second floor.

"What did you do about it?" Gunner asked.

"Went up and looked down the hall. All the doors were closed and I couldn't see anything, so I figured it must have been a backfire from outdoors, and just sounded like it came from inside."

"None of the second-floor tenants heard it?"

"I don't think any were in, except Mr. Spoda. Most tenants are out to dinner about then."

"You know Gerard Hawk?" Gunner asked.

The clerk shook his head. "Unless he's the old guy who came by about six, just after I went on duty."

"What did he look like?"

"Tall and kind of bent over. White hair and a droopy white mustache. He asked for Mr. Spoda's room number, but he never went up. Just thanked me and left."

"He didn't come back at eight-thirty?"

Again the clerk shook his head. Then he shrugged. "Maybe by the back stairs, but I didn't see him."

Gunner went to examine the back stairs. They could be

seen from the desk, he noted, but were invisible from the left side of the lobby.

Returning to the clerk, he asked, "Were you behind the desk when you heard the shot?"

"No, reading a paper over there." He pointed to a leather easy chair well to the left of the desk. "When things are quiet, I don't sit at the desk much."

Mark Fallon said, "It's obvious that crazy old man killed him, Sergeant. You have any objection to my going along when you make the arrest?"

After examining him moodily, Gunner shrugged. "Leave your pet apes behind and you can come."

The lawyer told his two henchmen he wouldn't need them anymore that day.

Mrs. Worth answered the door at the Riverview Senior Citizens Retirement Home. Showing them into an immaculate but old-fashioned parlor, she invited them to sit.

Politely declining for both of them, Gunner said, "We're here on rather unpleasant business, Mrs. Worth. Nick Spoda was murdered last night."

The retirement home manager's eyes widened, but she said nothing.

"Mr. Hawk had an appointment with him at eight-thirty. That's when Spoda was shot."

Mrs. Worth's eyes widened even more. "You can't possibly be suggesting that Mr. Hawk killed him."

"Afraid I am. He was pretty fond of Olivia Pritchard, wasn't he?"

"We all were."

"He was pretty sore about Nick being turned loose."

"We all were that, too, Sergeant. But Mr. Hawk's a law-abiding man. He used to be a policeman, himself."

"He mentioned that. Do you know where?"

"All over the country. He was a G-Man under the famous Melvin Purvis. Mr. Hawk helped shoot Dillinger, he was at the shootout with the Ma Barker gang, and he once put a bullet in Pretty Boy Floyd."

Mark Fallon said, "There you are, Sergeant. Those FBI

men in the 1930s were nothing but legal killers. Old J. Edgar Hoover didn't believe in arresting bank robbers. His order was to shoot hell out of them."

"That was fifty years ago," Gunner said.

"Once a killer, always a killer, Sergeant. The old coot was trained to shoot suspects on sight, and obviously that's still his philosophy."

Gunner asked Mrs. Worth where Gerard Hawk was.

"In Anna Stenger's room, I imagine. Usually they play bridge there mornings. Three-handed, now that Olivia's gone."

She led them into the hall and across it to the nearest door. When she knocked, Anna Stenger's voice called an invitation to come in.

Anna, Hester Lloyd, and Gerard Hawk sat at a card table in the center of the room. It was a large room, airy and well-lighted by French doors on two sides which led to the front and side lawns. The lawn was not more than six inches below the doorsills, Gunner noted, making it convenient for the old people to step outdoors without having to bother going through the building to the front door.

The three card players greeted the sergeant without any evidence of surprise, ignoring Mark Fallon.

Gunner got right to the point. "Mr. Hawk, Nick Spoda was shot to death last night."

Riffling the cards, the old man began to deal. "Young fellow who shot Olivia, you mean?"

Mark Fallon said, "He didn't shoot anyone."

Anna Stenger said, "You put down my last score, Hester?"

"Of course," the plump woman said. "You made two spades." She turned a score pad for Hester to see.

Gunner said, "Mr. Hawk, I'm afraid I have to arrest you on suspicion of murder. You have the right to remain silent, and if you do make a statement, it may be taken down and be used as evidence against you. You also have the right to legal counsel, and if you can't afford a lawyer, one may be assigned to you at public expense."

"Don't think I need one," the old man said. He glanced

up at Fallon. "Nice that you're handy, in case I do."

The lawyer looked offended. "I advise you to hire other counsel."

Gerard Hawk shrugged. "What makes you suspect me, Sergeant?"

"Mr. Fallon says you had an appointment with Spoda for eight-thirty last night, and that's when he was shot."

The old man looked up at Fallon again. "What gave you that idea?"

"I talked to Nick on the phone right after you called him. He told me."

Hawk looked down at his cards. "Hearsay. One heart."

"One diamond," Hester said.

"You have to say two diamonds," Anna said.

"What do you mean, hearsay?" Fallon asked in a loud voice.

"Not admissible in court. Never phoned the man."

"Two diamonds," Hester said.

Gunner said, "The hotel night clerk's testimony isn't hearsay, Mr. Hawk. He says you stopped in about two-and-a-half hours before the shooting and asked for Spoda's room number."

"Oh, that. Got to thinking about that dog he said he wanted to sell to Olivia. Thought I might buy it myself, then decided not to, so I left without going up. You going to bid, Anna?"

"Pass," Anna said.

"I'm afraid it isn't going to be that easy," Gunner said with regret. "You own a gun, Mr. Hawk?"

"Sure. Forty-five semiautomatic. Glad to loan it to you for ballistic tests. That's why you asked, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's why I asked."

"Used to own a pair of them," Hawk said. "Accidentally dropped one in the river a while back. Two hearts."

"Pass," Hester said.

"Pass," Anna said.

Mark Fallon watched irritably as the old man picked up the blind dummy and began laying out cards. "Why don't

you stop this nonsense and put cuffs on the man?" he asked Gunner.

Hester Lloyd suddenly asked, "What time was this Spoda man killed?"

"Eight-thirty last night," Gunner said.

"Then it wasn't Mr. Hawk did it. The three of us played cards right here from six-thirty until eleven, and he wasn't out of our sight for a minute. Right, Anna?"

"Right, Hester." The retired schoolteacher looked up at the sergeant. "I can swear to that in court, Sergeant. Lead, Hester."

Sergeant Gunner looked at the expression on Mark Fallon's face. Then he started to laugh. Once started, he couldn't stop. He leaned against the wall and howled until tears ran down his face.

Mark Fallon began to yell something about conspiracy.

Over the hubbub, Anna Stenger's voice rose shrilly. "Hester, you reneged. If you can't play fair, I'm not going to play at all." ST

ALIBI

Courtroom practices, like most types of ceremonial procedures, change much more slowly than do ordinary customs. Hence the lawyers of Britain continued to spout Latin long after it was abandoned in everyday speech. Even when a good English equivalent was available, the learned counsel of the seventeenth century was likely to prefer some ancient phrase.

Criminal cases involved frequent use of the term *alibi*—Latin for *elsewhere.* Many a defense attorney rested his case upon showing that his client was alibi at the time of the crime. In a famous trial of 1730, the jury disregarded instructions and instead of "not guilty," returned the verdict: "We, the jury, find that the accused was alibi."

Use of the centuries-old term was so common that it entered modern speech without change in spelling and came to stand for any evidence proving absence from the scene of the crime.

Marvin Vanoni

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JACK RITCHIE

The world of mystery fiction lost a great creative talent when Jack Ritchie died in the spring of 1983. He was and is an internationally renowned writer of mystery short stories, having more than 500 published. One of his stories, ***The Absence of Emily,*** *captured the coveted Edgar award, presented by the Mystery Writers of America, in 1981. Another,* ***A New Leaf,*** *was made into a movie. Several more have been adapted for television.*

His intriguing tales have been reprinted in more than 30 anthologies, and a number of them have appeared in England, Germany, South Africa, Norway, Switzerland, and other countries.

Ritchie is a specialist in brevity and relies on wry humor rather than gore. These qualities will be especially evident when you accept our invitation for a—very brief, we expect—visit to . . .

THE HOUSE OF YORICK

It was dusk when the headlights of their car turned into my driveway. I watched as the automobile proceeded through the avenue of twisted bare trees and parked immediately behind my sedan in front of the house.

I waited until they used the knocker and then opened the door. "Good evening," I said somberly.

They were Mr. and Mrs. Randall. They had written ahead saying that they were prepared to rent my house for at least one month.

I do not like renting my home. I detest it. However, I have no other source of income and so, periodically, I am forced to do so.

Mr. Randall was tall, well-dressed, and had a look of skepticism on his face. "So this is the haunted house?"

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"Yes," I said. "Please come in."

They entered the large dim vestibule, and I led them directly to my study.

Mrs. Randall was a bit more impressed by her surroundings than her husband. "Clara Mercer told us all about your place."

"Ah, yes," I said. "She saw the Medusa, didn't she?"

Mrs. Randall nodded eagerly. "She was upstairs in the bedroom combing her hair when this Medusa came right through the wall, her eyes gleaming, that dirty smile on her face, and those snakes in her hair wriggling and writhing."

I smiled. "According to the legend, Mrs. Mercer should have turned to stone."

"Well, she didn't," Mrs. Randall said. "She just shrieked and ran out of the room, down the stairs, and right out the front door. She wouldn't come back into the house for anything. Her husband had to do the packing, and they left right away."

"He wouldn't talk to her for weeks," Randall said. "He was sore about losing the rent money he'd paid."

"That *was* unfortunate," I agreed. "But I do have my rules; and without rules, you know, the world becomes anarchy."

I went to my desk and pulled out a printed form. "I wish you would read this carefully before you sign. It stipulates the amount of the rental and, further, that none of the money will be returned to you if you decide to leave before the end of the month. Also, you will notice, I am absolved from all injuries you might incur—physical, mental, or emotional—while you occupy this house or are in the process of leaving."

I smiled faintly. "Several years ago a Mr. Wilkinson broke his leg while fleeing the building. He sued. I won the case, of course, but it *was* a nuisance. So I decided to add the anti-suing clause."

"Have you been living here alone?" Mrs. Randall asked.

"Oh, yes. Quite alone. I prefer it that way."

"But it's such a *big* house."

"Yes. It is rather large. Twenty-two rooms."

Mr. Randall had been studying the paintings hanging on the walls—the ruined castle in the moonlight, the graveyard scene from Hamlet. He seemed particularly interested in the oil depicting snapping wolves in pursuit of a troika over the snowy landscape. He turned back to me. "So this ghost appears as Medusa?"

"Not necessarily," I said. "He is able to take many forms."

"He?" Randall snorted. "Does this ghost have a name?"

"I call him Yorick."

Randall smiled tightly. "I have never seen a ghost, and I don't ever intend to."

"Good for you, sir." I turned to Mrs. Randall. "Have you ever experienced any apparitions? Or had any recurring nightmares?"

"It's funny that you should ask," she said, and shuddered. "When I was a little girl, we used to have our milk delivered. Our milkman was a giant sort of a person with only one ear and a terrible scar on his face. My mother used to say that if I didn't behave, he would carry me away some day. And do you know, to this very day, I have horrible dreams about that actually happening."

There was a sudden sharp clatter from upstairs, and Mrs. Randall started. "What was that?"

"Just a tree branch lashing a window," I said. "The wind seems to be picking up."

It is extremely difficult to rent a large Victorian house situated in an isolated countryside. People simply do not like the solitude. They prefer neighbors near, access to shopping centers, and the like. Realizing this, when I advertise for rental, I find it necessary to mention that my house is haunted.

It is commonly supposed that haunted houses *repel* people. Actually, quite the reverse is true. They attract them. Like flies.

It is not that most people would actually care to live in a haunted house for any length of time, but they *are* challenged to test the house for a night, a week, or a month—

and are willing to pay rather handsomely for the opportunity.

Since the spring of this year, I have rented my home nineteen times to couples, or families. None of them, as far as I know, have remained in my house for even as much as one entire night.

Mr. and Mrs. Randall signed the form before I led them upstairs to the large bedroom I'd prepared. As we entered, Mrs. Randall suddenly stopped and listened. "Did you hear that?" she asked anxiously.

I nodded. "These old houses create noises of their own—the building settling, you know, old timbers creaking, perhaps a squirrel scrambling across the roof. During the day, one scarcely notices these things; but in the darkness of the night, they seem to be strangely magnified."

I smiled. "Your husband seems to be so level-headed. Apparently, he has never seen any ghosts or had nightmares the way most imaginative people do."

"But he *does* have one nightmare that comes and goes," Mrs. Randall said. "It started after we saw *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. That night he woke up screaming that the hound was after him. And I can tell whenever he dreams about the dog, because his feet churn up the sheets like he's running."

"Nonsense," Randall snapped. "I do not have nightmares about any damn dog."

I nodded approvingly. "That, sir, is your best defense. Simply keep telling yourself over and over again that you will not see a huge brown slavering mastiff."

He frowned retrospectively. "Slavering?" Then he pulled himself together and glared at me. "I, for one, do not intend to let my imagination get the better of me tonight."

After I left them, I packed my overnight bag and went out to my car. I heard the far-away howl of a farm dog. He was soon joined by a chorus of others, their cries echoing and re-echoing over the bleak countryside. Yes, a perfect night.

I drove to the village some four miles distant and got my usual room in Mrs. McFee's boarding house.

I slept nicely. Then, after a good breakfast, I drove back to my home.

The driveway was empty, and the front door swung open to the wind.

I went upstairs to the Randalls' bedroom. That door, too, had been left open. I glanced about. One of them seemed to have had enough presence of mind to pack their suitcases before they left. This does not always happen.

I wondered what they had seen. The huge brown slavering mastiff? Or the monster milkman?

I listened to the brisk autumn wind tugging at the shutters and decided that the Randalls would be the last renters for this season.

It was just about time for me to settle in for the winter. I am quite a homebody. It always pains me to leave the house, even if it is for just one night.

I went down to my study, made a fire, then selected a volume of fantasy stories I'd read and re-read and would read again.

I sat down in my favorite easy chair.

Yes, it is remarkable how people will see the things they fear.

I, myself, have a recurring dream in which I find myself in a huge opera house. In one of the opposite boxes, there stands a tall man enveloped in a black cloak, his gleaming, piercing eyes riveted on mine. In my dream, I seem to zoom in closer and closer—somewhat like a television camera—until his eyes become his entire face. Shimmering, horrifying . . . .

A milky, elongated mist formed beside my armchair. It swirled and twisted, slowly solidifying into a dark-cloaked figure with huge burning eyes that bored into mine malevolently.

I suppose that very few of the people who have rented my home and later fled into the night choose to believe, even now, that what they saw was other than the product of

their fevered imaginations—spurred on by the general atmosphere of the house and perhaps some nudging upon my part.

But they are wrong. There really *is* a ghost in this house. His name is Yorick, and he is able to assume any form he chooses.

Now he hovered over me, eyes tremendous and alive with menace.

We are the best of friends, but he was being playful again.

"Now, Yorick," I admonished, "*stop* that."

He apologized. "Sorry, Henry, I just couldn't resist it." He faded gracefully into the air all about me.

I lit my pipe and we began reading. ST

TO BE CAUGHT RED-HANDED

Criminal detection as a science was unknown before the middle of the nineteenth century. Earlier ages depended upon two methods: 1) securing a confession by torture of a suspect, or 2) catching a man in the act of committing a crime. Circumstantial evidence was not admitted in court.

In the case of persons of good reputation, it was dangerous to try to force a confession of an alleged crime. A farmer or tradesman well-liked in the community might be suspected of all kinds of lawbreaking, but officers were reluctant to touch him without actually surprising him in the act of committing a crime.

One of the most common felonies of the period was that of butchering another man's sheep, pig, or cow. Even possession of the fresh meat did not constitute proof of guilt in such cases. Only when a man was caught with the dead animal, and with blood on his hands, could he be arrested with certainty of a conviction.

Any man caught red-handed wasted his breath if he pleaded for mercy. So the expression came to be applied to surprising a person in any act of stealth, whether in violation of the law or not.

Marvin Vanoni

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STEVE RASNIC TEM

Mr. Tem's fertile and creative mind frequently turns out short stories involving horror and dark fantasy. YOU DREAMED IT is no exception. But in this poignant tale, the chills and shudders have even more impact because of their all-too-common parallels in modern society. It's hardly possible to read this gripping story without being deeply touched.

YOU DREAMED IT

Cheryl woke up abruptly and rubbed her eyes as hard as she could. Her father had held her head over the toilet bowl. He was going to drown her. She was sure of it.

But then, all of a sudden, he had stopped, and she'd looked up into his faraway face. The face had been dark, and although she knew it was her father's face, she really couldn't see it very well. *Daddy?* she'd said, but very softly. She wasn't even sure he could hear her. She wasn't even sure she wanted him to hear her.

He hadn't said anything. He'd picked her up, thrown her over his shoulder, and carried her from the small bathroom to her bedroom at the end of the dark hallway. There was a bend in the hallway where the stairs came up. He was careful walking there; it would be easy to slip and drop her down the stairs. Maybe he wanted to slip, she thought. But he didn't, this time. He'd just hit her head real hard against the doorframe when he walked into the hall. She'd sobbed once but held onto her cries, afraid he would get mad. Looking at the big staircase falling off into the darkness had helped her stop crying—it was so scary.

When they got to the end of the hallway, he'd thrown her onto the bed. She made herself real stiff trying not to cry,

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but that made her back hurt when she hit the bed. She gasped once, then gasped again when he started pouring water on her. Glassfuls of water, hitting her face harder and harder. Soaking into the bed. Soaking into her pajamas. Making everything wet, everything dripping with it. She finally began to cry; she couldn't help it. They would think she'd wet the bed again—Mommy and Daddy. She'd be in trouble.

He didn't say a thing. After he finished wetting her bed, he turned and left.

Cheryl looked at her bed and reached out carefully with one hand. It was damp. So were her pajamas. She stared at the one window in the room, full of bright light, like water. She couldn't decide if she had dreamed or not.

Her father walked in. "Wet your bed again?" he said quietly.

Cheryl nodded her head and looked away.

"Well, that's all right. You know what you need to do now."

Cheryl got up and began stripping the bed. It was hard for her; the covers were tucked in real tight and all the blankets and the quilt were heavy, especially once they were wet. But she had to do it herself. That's what her daddy called "the deal."

He stepped out of her way as she waddled over to the hamper. She almost tripped at the last second, but then he grabbed her and set her upright.

"Thank you," she said softly. He started to leave. "Daddy?" He turned around. "Did you take me to the bathroom last night?"

He crouched down then, and she saw his face—all pink and newly shaven. He smiled with large thin lips and kissed her on the cheek. "No, sure didn't, Angel. You must have dreamed it."

She watched his face go away as he stood up. She nodded, and he smiled again.

She got in trouble that day at school for staring out the window too much and not doing her work. She couldn't help it. Everything looked so blurry outside; like the sun

had come down and made all the plants, cars, and buildings glow with a funny light. Or like she was seeing everything outside through water, but it wasn't raining. It was funny.

Later, she looked into her lunch box and brought her marbles out. They were red, blue, green, lots of different colors. Some you could even see through. A bunch of them had belonged to her first daddy, her real daddy, her mommy had told her. She liked looking at those the best. They looked so old. And they made her feel better. She brought them to school every day, but she didn't play with them. She just liked to look. Somebody might steal them if she played.

Before dinner, her daddy came home and stepped on her foot. Twice. He pretended he didn't notice, and she pretended it didn't happen, even though it hurt a lot. But she pulled her feet up into the chair and sat on them, just to make sure he didn't do it again.

After dinner, he passed by her in the upstairs hallway and nudged her into the wall. She hit her cheek and it was cut a little.

A few minutes later, he came out of his bedroom. She was sitting in the middle of the hall, crying and holding her cheek. The blood felt hot and sticky on her fingers.

"Why, Cheryl! What happened?" he said and crouched down next to her, his wide face filling her vision.

"You . . . you pushed me!" she cried, sobbing, and for a moment was very afraid, afraid of what he would do to her now that she had said that. She shouldn't have said it, but she'd been hurt, and it made her forget.

"Why . . . how can you say that!" he said, looking real puzzled. Cheryl knew he was play-acting; his eyes were too wide and his mouth so large and open he looked like the giant chicken she liked so much on the cartoons. But she didn't like her daddy like this. She didn't like him at all.

"I'm . . . I'm sorry. I guess I fell." She looked down.

Then he was holding her, speaking softly to her, telling her that everything was going to be okay, and that he loved her very much. He talked to her just like she was his own

real daughter. She hugged him back real hard, hoping maybe it was all true, though she really didn't think it was. Her old daddy had died so long ago she couldn't remember him, and when this new one came along last year and married her mother, she used to dream sometimes that he was actually her real daddy come back to her, and that her mommy just didn't recognize him.

But that couldn't be true. Her real daddy wasn't like this one at all.

That night in bed she was thinking about her real daddy when the tall man with the dark face came in. She knew he was really her new daddy, but now she was trying to think of him as a stranger, a bad dark stranger who pretended to help her by taking her to the bathroom so she wouldn't wet the bed but who was really an evil, bad man out to get her. It made her feel better that way. It made her feel safer when she had to be with her new daddy during the daytime.

The man with the dark face, the man with no face at all it was so dark, reached down and lifted her up out of the bed.

"Time to use the bathroom," he said softly.

He took her down the hall into the bathroom and tried to crash her head against the doorframe. But she was too smart for him this time and put her hands over her head. She hurt her fingers when he bumped her into the doorframe, but at least they didn't hurt as bad as her head had. Sometimes her head hurt so bad she couldn't sleep after that. And besides, her mommy asked funny questions about the bruises.

So she wasn't expecting it when he ran her face into the front of the sink. Her nose mashed and she couldn't breathe and it felt all funny. When she started to cry, he put his hand over her mouth and held it there so long she started feeling sleepy. Then he took it away. Then she was too sleepy to cry.

The next morning her mommy was all upset about her nose, wanting to know what happened.

"I can't remember," Cheryl said.

"But your nose is all bloody! Surely you know what

happened."

"Maybe Cheryl was playing where she shouldn't be playing and that's why she's afraid to tell us," her new daddy said, looking funny at her mommy.

Cheryl didn't say anything at first, then looked up at her mother. "I have bad dreams sometimes, and they make things happen."

"Well, you didn't dream a bloody nose!" her mommy said.

"I . . . I think I must have tripped when Daddy was in my room last night."

Her new daddy looked at her mommy, then turned to Cheryl. "I wasn't in your room, Cheryl. You must have dreamed it."

Her mommy nodded her head slowly, and it looked to Cheryl like her mommy was very nervous. Cheryl nodded her head back. "I guess I did," she said.

"I know . . . you must have had a bad dream and fallen out of bed," her new daddy said.

Cheryl nodded silently, and the more she thought about it, the more she tried to think her new daddy was right. She wanted it to be true.

She sat for a long time on the stairs before bedtime, listening to her mommy putting away the dishes, her new daddy talking to her in low sounds like a dog barking. For a while it made her giggle, thinking that he sounded like a puppy, but then she got scared, and the staircase seemed darker than before.

". . . getting to be a problem . . . her imagination. . . ."

The words were suddenly easier to hear, and at first she didn't know why. But then she understood.

"She's delusional, Helen. All these dreams. And I think she's lying to you . . . to *us*, half the time. . . ."

He *knew* she was out on the stairs listening. And he wanted to make sure she heard what he was telling her mommy.

". . . something wrong with her, Helen. We love her. *I* love her. But we may have to send her away. . . ."

Cheryl crawled up the steps carefully. She was afraid to stand up and walk, afraid she would make too much noise.

And she didn't cry this time. It surprised her, but she didn't even feel like crying.

That night, Cheryl woke up a little early. She looked at the doorway, but no one was there. The dark man with no face hadn't come yet.

She lay there thinking about what her daddy would do if he were in her place—her *real* daddy. Her good daddy.

She got up and went to her closet. She took out her bag of marbles. They were real old; she'd had them a long time. She took them and walked out the door.

She was real careful placing the marbles around the bend of the hallway, at the top of the stairs. She put them down one at a time, so that they made a nice pattern. The pattern looked a little like the moon. She put her real father's old marbles on the outside, and the newer marbles on the inside.

Then she got up to leave. There wasn't much light in the hallway. You couldn't even see the marbles on the dark carpet now.

She didn't have to wait long after she got back into bed. She heard her mommy and daddy's bedroom door opening, and the creakings and groanings of the hallway floor as the dark man with no face walked towards her bedroom.

Then there was a big crash, followed by a loud scream, and a lot of thumps and bangs as the dark man fell down the staircase.

Cheryl crept out of her bedroom and peered over the rail. The moon was shining through the living room windows, making a glistening spot on mommy's favorite yellow rug. The dark man, her new daddy, lay in the middle of that spot, like a fish sleeping in bright, clear water. But his head was turned all funny.

Cheryl looked at the door to her mommy and daddy's bedroom. It was still shut, and she couldn't hear mommy inside—she must still be asleep, Cheryl thought. Cheryl stooped down and picked up all the marbles she could find, putting them back in her bag. Then she started down the stairs, picking up the two or three that had fallen on the

steps.

At the bottom of the staircase, she picked up the four marbles that were lying around her new daddy. She looked down at him. He stared back with quiet eyes. Cheryl watched him a long time. The eyes did not move. She remembered Tommy Wilson's cat after the car hit it, and then she really understood.

She knew she'd better hurry back up the steps and into bed before her mommy woke up, and maybe hide her marbles where no one would ever find them. But first she crouched in front of her new daddy's head, now so close to her, so clear in the bright moonlight. He was looking right at her; he'd *have* to listen to her this time.

"You must have dreamed it, Daddy," she whispered softly, trying to keep down a giggle and holding herself tightly in a snuggle-hug. "You dreamed it." ST

TO PULL ONE'S LEG

Now regarded as a typically British expression, *to pull one's leg* did not at first refer to playing a prank or a practical joke. It was born in London's underworld.

Until fairly modern times, thieves operating in the narrow back streets of the metropolis frequently worked in partnership with a specialist known as a "tripper-up." Using sometimes a walking stick with a curved handle, sometimes a piece of wire or rope, this worthy was highly skilled in the art of tripping pedestrians who ventured into the alleys. Once a victim was prostrate, an accomplice of the tripper-up pounced on him and stripped him of valuables. This ruse was successful even when the victim was armed.

Since the devices literally pulled the leg of a person in tripping him, the phrase entered common speech to mean any mishap which led to one's stumbling. Over a period of centuries, it came to be applied to the practice of making fun of a person, thereby causing him to betray his ignorance. A victim of a modern tripper-up is not likely to lose his watch and wallet, but he may lose his temper.

Marvin Vanoni

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LAW & DisorderR

Things are not always grim in the law-enforcement community. In between the apprehension of criminals and the maintenance of civil order, there's always time for a more cheerful moment or two. We herewith present just one of many such humorous highlights.

CONFESSIONS

by Homer E. Young

A few years ago, a deputy sheriff of the San Bernardino sheriff's office was assigned to a "wide spot in the road" on Highway 66, between Barstow and Needles, California. It was not much more than a service station and hamburger stand, used chiefly as a bus stop and relief station for travelers. Across the road stood a then-abandoned Catholic church.

Shortly after the deputy moved his mobile home to this location and positioned it on the north side of the highway, adjacent to the service facilities, a new priest arrived to reopen the mission church.

Almost immediately, the priest mounted a stereo loudspeaker system on an abandoned telephone pole next to the church and proceeded to play religious music at a healthy volume all day long—to the considerable irritation of everyone else within earshot.

One night, the deputy climbed the pole and changed the direction of the speakers, pointing them toward the vacant, sand-swept, desertlike area beyond the church.

The priest responded by placing a newly painted sign in front of the mission which read: "Confessions taken on Thursdays from 5 P.M. to 9 P.M."

A day or so later, the deputy erected a continuously illuminated sign in front of his mobile home reading: "Confessions taken here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!" ST

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As Crime Goes By...

John Ball

Every month, both here and in England, a number of new mystery/suspense novels are being published. Most of them are rewarding entertainment; a few are outstanding. However, if you go to your neighborhood bookstore, either privately owned or a chain outlet, you will have a hard time finding any of them on the shelves. This despite the fact that ever since 1923 the mystery novel has been the most popular form of fiction in the English language.

One answer to this dilemma is the mystery bookshops; there are now some thirty in the country and their number is growing. Most of them carry a large stock of all kinds of mystery/suspense literature, both new and used. Mail-order service is also frequently available.

One of the best is GROUNDS FOR MURDER in San Diego, California. This excellent shop publishes a monthly newsletter that reviews many new mysteries (more than we have space for here). It also includes articles about mystery authors and gives much other interesting information. It is free for the asking. The shop also sponsors a mystery club and gives receptions for visiting authors. The mail-order department will be glad to supply your needs, even if you live in Moose Breath, Saskatchewan. The address is: GROUNDS FOR MURDER, 2707 Congress St., San Diego, CA 92110.

Now to some new books. If high adventure is your dish, you will find plenty of it in Craig Thomas's *Firefox Down*. This is a sequel to the very successful *Firefox* that was made into a notable film. The sequel picks up from the moment the first books ends. As the title implies, the highly advanced fighter aircraft stolen from the Soviet Union does not make it unhindered to England. Instead, it is forced down. The events that follow are reminiscent of *Gorky Park*; the scenes inside Russia often grippingly realistic. Another film seems likely with Clint Eastwood, to whom the book is dedicated, continuing his role as the American pilot who flies the Firefox. Bantam $14.95.

As every reader of this magazine will know, there are certain short stories in the crime genre that are widely accepted

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as classics. They have been anthologized many times, but try to find a certain one when you want it. Now Bill Pronzini, Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh have put together an anthology called *The Mystery Hall of Fame* that contains many of the most famous shorter works. What gives this book particular significance is the fact that the Mystery Writers of America made the selections through a poll of the membership. Here, then, are the best of tens of thousands of stories chosen by the people who make their livings writing them. The end result is a cornerstone volume for any mystery library. Morrow $17.95.

Bill Granger is building a reputation as an espionage writer. This is a specialized field that has attracted some outstanding talent in the past, including such names as Graham Greene, Len Deighton, Helen MacInnes, Geoffrey Household, Adam Hall, Ian Fleming, Eric Ambler, Trevanian and, more recently, Martin Cruz Smith. All of these authors have attracted a wide readership and much film attention. Granger's recent bid to join this select company, *The Shattered Eye*, is now available in paperback. The venerable device of a mole in high places is used once again, but the November Man is back at the top of his form. Pocket Books $3.95.

A not widely known, but very good source for some excellent mysteries is Academy Chicago. This small publisher has an eagle eye for first-class material and is building an impressive list. Among the authors is Leo Bruce (the pseudonym of a distinguished British scholar) who has been described as a master of the genre. For a good baffling read that will take you up the garden path in fine style, try *Furious Old Woman*. The title is innocuous, but the book isn't. $4.95 in paperback.

Very well known, and deservedly so, is H. R. F. Keating, the brilliant British mystery commentator, critic and author. He is the creator of the delightful Inspector Ganesh Ghote of the Bombay Police, a man not to be missed. A good place to meet him is in *Inspector Ghote Trusts the Heart*. $4.95 in paperback. For a catalog of other offerings by this growing publisher, write to Academy Chicago, 425 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611.

Another crime writer building a solid reputation is Robert Barnard whose *Death in a Cold Climate* broke the ice (sorry) for him. His very successful *A Little Local Murder* has just been reprinted by Dell for $2.95.

The literature about Sherlock Holmes continues to grow, de-

spite the fact that the Master retired after his capture of Von Bork, the great German spy of World War I. To every loyal member of the Baker Street Irregulars any suggestion that Holmes and Watson are fictitious is absolute heresy. Among the true believers is Trevor H. Hall whose new book, *Sherlock Holmes and his Creator,* contains a number of engaging essays about the immortal pair. Two of them are contributed by the Venerable Charles O. Ellison who, as a boy, was presented to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Mr. Hall adds a great deal of fun to the game, especially when he brands Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven Percent Solution,* which purports to be a previously unknown manuscript by Dr. Watson, an outright forgery. A word from the Master could settle the matter, but he is still in the strictest retirement, keeping bees on the Sussex Downs. St. Martin's Press $5.95 in quality paperback.

There are millions of mystery buffs who combine a classic taste with a paperback budget. To cater to this large market Harper and Row is offering a continuing project called The Perennial Library. This is a series of nicely designed paperback reprints of older works that are now all but impossible to find in their original forms. Both British and American works appear in this series which has already reached substantial proportions. Many of the covers are cleverly designed to fit the period of the story. Three of Ross Thomas's excellent works about espionage and government have just been added: *The Money Harvest, The Cold War Swap* and *If You Can't Be Good.* Also new to the series is S. B. Hough's *The Tender* and the oddly titled *Fear Fortune, Father.* The prices on these volumes vary, but most of them are $2.95. A full list is available from Harper and Row, 49 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016.

The excellent series called *Mystery* now running on public television is featuring John Mortimer's memorable "Rumpole of the Bailey." Rumpole, as everyone knows now, is a brilliant barrister who refuses many suggestions that he retire. Instead he continues to defend his accused clients in court with devastating results. It's a pleasure to report the appearance of *The First Rumpole Omnibus* which contains three of the highly readable books about Rumpole. It's available from Penguin at $7.95 in quality paperback. ST

ROBERT E. BUTTON

To say that Robert E. Button has achieved much in life is indeed an understatement. Currently president of the American TransCommunications Corporation of Greenwich, Connecticut, Button is a nationally known authority on cable television and satellite communications.

Before becoming Director of the Voice of America in 1955, Mr. Button spent fifteen years with the National Broadcasting Company as a program and sales executive. He also worked for six years in the U.S. Foreign Service, was one of the early executives of COMSAT, and performed a pioneering job as Satellite Director for Teleprompter.

During World War II, Button served in every rank from private to colonel and was a member of General Eisenhower's G-2 staff. He was one of the few Americans involved in the "Ultra-Intelligence" operation.

A graduate of Dartmouth College and Brooklyn Law School, he has taught at the universities of Connecticut, Virginia, and Columbia in the areas of futuristics and outer space. More recently, he's been instrumental in piecing together the first cable-satellite link, which is now the foundation of Home Box Office.

To top it all off, Mr. Button is an accomplished musician and, now, a contributing author to the new SAINT Magazine. His observations on communications spying make fascinating reading.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEPATHY COMPANY?

by Robert E. Button

Some of the most significant events in modern history have been initiated by the surreptitious intercept of someone's mail, or voice, or messages in some other form. This is often quite easy, for there is a curious tendency for a person,

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when on the phone or radio, to become absorbed in the dialogue to the exclusion of any worry about being overheard. In times of war, all the posters and warnings and security indoctrination in the world cannot totally overcome this very human failing.

"Listening in" on other people's communications was probably practiced even in the days of smoke signals, which, like frequencies on the air waves, were out there for anyone to grab. However, current training on the subject of confidentiality in message transmittal usually begins with the history of British successes against such threats as were posed by Mary, Queen of Scots, and King Phillip of Spain.

In the latter case, the king's messages to the pope, asking for the papal blessing on the Armada, found their way into the pocket of the pope's bathrobe. They were then extracted and digested by the pope's valet, who was a British agent. Small wonder that the Armada was stale news when it appeared off Plymouth. British histories, such as the Camden Annals, skirt around the incident with the observation that it was considered too delicate to be entrusted to the general public.

The intercept profession, as it is now practiced, had its inception when Marconi made it possible to transmit information through the air at various frequencies. This provided an irresistible invitation to those of a curious or investigative disposition to listen in, and become informed, about matters which were either relevant to their interests, as with spies tapping into governmental communications, or, usually, none of their business whatsoever.

An example of an intercept with far-reaching consequences has recently been brought to light. The firing of General MacArthur by President Truman was generally thought to be based on irreconcilable differences in their strategic thinking. The truth was found in the intercept of certain foreign ambassadorial messages quoting MacArthur, in guarded conversation, as having in mind the gravest doubts about the policies of his own government. But the public was not allowed to know this. Nor were the ambassadors who were involved.

We have only recently been initiated into the arcane world of ultra intercept intelligence and have discovered how it affected the outcome of World War II, both in the East and the West. Late in the war, when an unfortunate American soldier fell into a Bavarian lake and

drowned, a search party dragged the lake for his body but came up, instead, with a large watertight chest. On being opened, the chest was found to contain files upon files of German intercepts of Allied radio traffic, all neatly decoded and written out in German. Among the originators of the messages were American ambassadors in Europe and His Holiness, the Pope, who ran a pretty good intelligence system of his own. Understandably, the existence of this literary treasure was hidden away, as is almost everything else on this particular subject.

After World War II, the technology of communications unfolded rapidly, and the volume of communications traffic expanded exponentially with population growth. Equally hectic was the increase in effort and complexity of the forces bent on intercepting everything, friendly or not.

Having been involved in the intercept profession during World War II, and following its progress with interest since that time, I can visualize a new, and possibly harmless, form of warfare. Imagine, if you will, vast armies sitting behind consoles listening to each other and trying to analyze the message content so as to reveal the intentions of their adversaries. Imagine a war characterized not by detonations of explosives but rather by the beep and whistle of electronic games, the hush of the library, and the sweat of analysts.

When all our satellites and computers and surveillance ships fail to come up with the necessary information, we may turn to a new, super-secret intelligence source. Like the National Security Agency, it, too, may be called by the initials NSA. But this time, those letters will probably stand for National Spiritualist Agency, in which the medium will give the message. AT&T will then represent the American Telephone and Telepathy Company, and everyone will be able to read anyone else's mind. And this activity may just prove to be so interesting that war as we know it will be forgotten and will vanish from the face of the earth. ST

PAUL M. STOMBAUGH

The scientific approach to crime detection is a comparatively recent development in man's struggle to apprehend lawbreakers. Criminals needn't be caught "red-handed" by a human eyewitness anymore. There are other means—methodical, painstaking, and logical means—to accomplish the same result. Experts in the forensic science of crime detection are a relatively new breed of lawmen—working quietly in labs, unsung and little understood by the average citizen.

Paul M. Stombaugh is just such a forensic expert. Having graduated with a degree in biological sciences, he was appointed Special Agent with the FBI in 1951. A few years later, he was assigned to the FBI Laboratory and trained in the Hair and Fiber fields. Besides conducting critical examinations, he often testified as an expert witness for various police jurisdictions.

Mr. Stombaugh retired from the FBI in 1976, set up the County Crime Lab in Greenville, South Carolina, and now performs the same kinds of examinations he did with the FBI. In addition, he assists county and local law enforcement officers in on-the-scene investigations of murders, suicides, and other violent crimes—collecting and preserving physical evidence.

His account of the solving of a multiple killing by the collection of physical evidence is a plus for the readers of The SAINT Magazine.

THE SILENT WITNESSES

by Paul M. Stombaugh

During the early morning hours of February 17, 1970, Colette, Kimberly and Kristen MacDonald, the pregnant wife and two children of Captain Jeffrey R. MacDonald, were brutally murdered in their Fort Bragg, N.C. residence. At the time, I was assigned to the FBI Laboratory in Washington, D.C.,

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unaware that I would become involved in the case at a later date.

The only live witness to the murders was Captain MacDonald himself, a Green-beret Army physician assigned to the Fort Bragg base. He related basically the same story to the Army CID investigators, FBI agents and, later, to the news media and on television talk shows—as well as under oath to an Army inquiry board and a federal grand jury.

The Captain stated he had watched television until approximately 1:00 AM the morning of the murders, at which time he went to his bedroom, changed into his pajamas, and discovered his daughter Kristen, age three, asleep on his side of the bed. As he picked her up to take her to her own room, he noted that she had wet the bed. He carried her to her room and gave her a bottle of milk. Deciding against awakening Colette to have the sheets changed, he retired for the night on the couch in the living room, using an afghan as a cover.

Sometime later, he was awakened by the presence of intruders standing at the foot of the couch and by Colette shouting, "Jeff! Jeff! Why are they doing this to me?" He could also hear Kimberly screaming, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" The intruders, whom he described as two white males, one black male, and a white female, commenced to physically attack him. He recalled that the female was wearing high white boots, a floppy hat and had long blonde hair. She was holding a lighted candle and chanting, "Acid is groovy, rain is groovy. Kill the pigs." The four attacked him on and in the area of the couch with a club and cutting instruments. As he struggled with them, he felt a sharp pain in his chest and was knocked unconscious in the hallway entrance near the living room.

When he regained consciousness, he noted that his pajama top was torn and hanging from his wrists. The house was quiet and the intruders were apparently gone. He walked up the hall to the master bedroom where he found Colette lying on her back on the floor. She had been beaten about the head and severely stabbed numerous times in the chest and neck. He removed a protruding paring knife from her chest and cast it aside. He then placed his pajama top over her chest to keep her warm. The Captain attempted mouth to mouth resuscitation, but noted that the air bubbled out of the wounds in her chest.

He then went to the south bedroom and found the body of Kimberly, age five, in her bed with the covers pulled up to her shoulders. She had suffered a severe blow to the head that had crushed her skull. There also were numerous stab wounds to her neck. The other child, Kristen, was in her bed in the north bedroom. She, too, was covered and had suffered numerous stab wounds to her back and chest. The Captain went to the hall bathroom where he inspected his own wounds. He then returned to the master bedroom where he used the telephone to summon aid. He collapsed beside the body of Colette, where he was found by responding Military Police at approximately 3:50 AM.

The ensuing investigation by CID investigators uncovered many physical facts that threw grave suspicion on the truth of the Captain's story. The investigators noted initially that it had been raining periodically during the night, at times very heavily, yet no wet or muddy shoeprints were found on any of the floors in the residence. Further, though the building had a two-foot-wide strip of sand around it, no shoeprints were found in the strip. Yet tests proved it would readily accept and retain a print visible to the naked eye. It did not appear logical that a group of at least four people would all have purposely avoided stepping in the sand strip, nor would they all have wiped their feet clean before entering the house.

There had been no forcible entry into the house, although the back door which led to the utility room was standing open. The other doors and all windows were secured. The home had not been ransacked; nothing had been stolen. The hall closet contained a large quantity of various drugs and syringes used by the Captain in his profession. These were all intact. Why had they not been stolen by the group of "drug-crazed hippies," as the Captain had described the intruders?

The area surrounding the living room couch, where the Captain maintained he had been attacked and his pajama top torn, presented additional questions. The afghan he claimed he used as a cover was still on the couch, not on the floor where it would surely have fallen during the alleged altercation.

The coffee table, located immediately in front of the couch, was resting on its side, on top of games and magazines that had previously been on the table. Furthermore, this table was found to be top-heavy. In repeated tests it always flipped completely over onto its top

when upset. This suggested that the table had been eased over, causing the games and magazines to slide off first, coming to rest on the floor with the table top edge on top of them. Had the table been knocked over with much force, as would be expected in a violent struggle, the games and magazines would have been knocked *away* from the table.

Complicating the puzzle was a small bottle of glue that rested on the floor on the underside of the table top. The bottle would have had to roll *through* the table top after it was knocked from the table to come to rest in that position. This further supported the suspicion that the table had been eased rather than knocked over.

The Captain's slippers were on the floor in front of the couch. However, the toe portion of one was resting *on top* of one of the table legs rather than under it, suggesting the slippers had been placed there after the table was overturned.

The Captain's eyeglasses were on the floor and against the wall, several feet from the head of the couch. Had he removed them prior to retiring for the night, he would have placed them either on the lamp table at the head of the couch, or on the coffee table. If they had been on the lamp table, why did only the glasses get knocked off, and not the lamp and other numerous items that lay around it? If they had been on the coffee table, they would have fallen in the same direction as the magazines and games. It was also noted that one of the lenses of the eyeglasses had a small drop of blood on it.

Nothing else in the small living room or adjoining dining room had been disturbed. All lamps, vases, rugs, etc., were intact. This was not what one would expect to find in the aftermath of a violent struggle involving five people.

The couch and the surrounding area of the living room were meticulously examined. Although this was the area in which the Captain maintained he had been beaten, stabbed, and his pajama top torn, no blood, sewing threads, or yarns from the pajama top were found. A similar search of the hall, where he maintained he was knocked unconscious, also failed to reveal any blood, sewing threads, or yarns. The absence of these items of physical evidence indicated that the Captain was not correct in naming the location where he was attacked.

The master bedroom presented additional evidence tending to discredit the Captain's

story. He had emphatically denied moving the bodies of his wife and children, maintaining he left them as he found them. However, when the body of Colette was raised and placed on the stretcher, numerous sewing threads and yarns like those of the pajama top were found on the floor under her head and body. This indicated the torn top was in the room prior to Colette's body coming to rest on the floor. A careful search of the bedroom turned up over a hundred sewing threads and yarns like those from the torn top, as well as the pocket that had been ripped off. This pinpointed the master bedroom as the location where the pajama top had been torn, not the living room.

The word *PIG* had been printed in blood on the right headboard of the bed. Nearby, on the bed and the floor, were several more sewing threads and yarns.

The bedspread and top sheet from the bed were on the floor in front of the Captain's clothes closet. Both were heavily bloodstained. Blood spatters covered the bottom sheet, which was still on the bed. This indicated that the top sheet and bedspread had been removed from the bed prior to any physical and bloody violence in the room. Blood spatters were noted on all walls as well as the ceiling. Great quantities were also noted on the floor, where Colette had been lying.

An examination of the south bedroom revealed Kimberly in bed, the covers extending to her shoulders. She was resting on her left side. The right side of her face appeared to have been crushed from a blow. Several stab wounds were noted in the exposed area of the right side of her neck. Blood was spattered around her head on the pillows. When the bedcovers were pulled back, several sewing threads and yarns like those from the Captain's pajama top were found.

Kimberly's right wrist and the cuff of her right sleeve were bloodstained. It was noted, however, that the cuff had been pushed up the arm approximately three inches, exposing an area that was not bloodstained. A lock of her hair, heavily bloodstained, rested on the sheet, but there was no blood directly under it. These two facts indicated that Kimberly had been initially injured elsewhere, and moved to her bed after the blood had dried.

The left side of her head had also received a severe blow. Heavy bloodstains under her neck area and on the sheet, and spatters on the pillow case around her head, indicated that

the stabs to her neck and the blows to her head had probably been rendered after she was placed in her bed.

Kristen's body was found in her bed in the north bedroom, with the covers extending up to her left shoulder. A blue plastic baby bottle was by her mouth. She had been stabbed in the back and chest numerous times. Many, but not penetrating, small "prick marks" were noted among the stab wounds. Again, when the bed covers were removed, additional yarns and sewing threads like those of the torn pajama top were found. On the hardwood floor of Kristen's room were the impressions of two bare feet, made in blood. Both were identified as left footprints. Both were heading from the room toward the hall.

It should be noted that the CID investigators were accompanied by photographers. The entire scene was photographed before anything was moved as well as during the collection of the evidence. Later that morning, a special team of crime scene specialists from the U.S. Army Crime Laboratory at Fort Gordon, Georgia were flown in to assist in the collection and preservation of the physical evidence. They remained on the scene for several days. During this time, the bloody footprints in Kristen's room were positively identified as having been made by the left foot of Captain MacDonald. The specialists returned to Fort Gordon with the evidence they had collected for in-depth laboratory analysis.

The results of the laboratory examination, particularly of the bloodstains found throughout the residence, greatly aided the investigators. It was learned that each of the four individuals involved possessed a different blood type. Captain MacDonald was blood group "B," Colette blood group "A," Kimberly group "AB" and Kristen "O." The grouping of the bloodstains found throughout the house enabled the investigators to trace the movements of each individual during and after the attacks occurred, pinpointing the places where they were when their injuries were inflicted.

The blood found in the master bedroom was, for the most part, Colette's, including the blood used to inscribe the word *PIG* on the headboard of the bed. However, a large bloodstain located on the rug at the entrance to the master bedroom from the hall, some on the door jamb, and two spots found on the top sheet lying adjacent to the door, were identified as Kimberly's. This placed the child at the entrance to the

master bedroom when she was initially injured. No blood from Captain MacDonald or Kristen was found in the master bedroom.

Colette's blood was also identified in the form of numerous blood spatters on the wall alongside Kristen's bed in the north bedroom, and in the form of a very large bloodstain on the top sheet of the three-year-old's bed. This latter stain was so large it could only have occurred from a heavy direct flow of blood to the sheet. These findings placed Colette in Kristen's room when she was beaten.

The two bloody footprints on the bare floor of Kristen's room, previously identified as having been made by the Captain's left foot, were found to have been made with blood of the same blood group as Colette's. This was strange, inasmuch as both footprints were exiting the room, and a large quantity of Colette's blood would have been necessary for him to leave such prints. Yet, none of Colette's blood was on the floor of that room, except in the prints. The only other blood on the floor was Kristen's. It had flowed to the floor from her bed.

The other location in the residence where Kristen's blood was found was in the single spot on one lens of the Captain's eyeglasses, and they were on the floor of the living room. Since all evidence indicated that Kristen was stabbed to death in her bed, the question arose: How did Kristen's blood get on the eyeglasses?

The only places in the house where Captain MacDonald's blood was found were on the right side of the sink and step stool in the hall bathroom, and on the kitchen floor in front of the cabinets under the sink. The blood in both areas was in the form of drops. There were approximately eight drops on the kitchen floor. The cabinet under the sink contained a box of surgical gloves, hidden behind detergents. Several finger portions of a surgical glove had been found on the floor near Colette's body and in the top sheet and bedspread in the master bedroom. The remaining portions of the gloves, presumed to have been worn by the assailant(s) were never recovered.

All of the blood on the torn pajama top, with the exception of two small spots, was identified as Colette's. Of the two small spots, one was the Captain's, the other Kimberly's. Both were in the lower chest area of the garment.

During the initial search of the crime scene, a club, thirty-one inches in length and approximately two inches square,

had been found just outside the utility room door at the rear of the residence. A sharp "Old Hickory" brand paring knife and an ice pick were discovered under a bush at the corner of the residence, close to the club. All three could have been thrown from the utility room door, and all had blood from Colette and Kimberly on them. Yarns, like those from the torn pajama top, adhered to the club.

Although MacDonald denied seeing any of these items before, the club was positively identified as having been cut from a board found inside the residence. This was accomplished by matching growth rings of both boards and comparing the paint present on both. In addition, wooden splinters found in all three bedrooms were identified as having originated from the club. These findings placed the club inside the residence as one of the weapons.

The knife MacDonald claimed to have pulled from Colette's chest was lying on the floor of the master bedroom. The blade was dull and bent. Only one drop of Colette's blood was found on the handle of this knife. Yet, unless the knife had been wiped clean, it would have had a large amount of blood on it if it had, in fact, been sticking in Colette's chest as MacDonald stated. Two telephones were off their hooks—one in the master bedroom, the other in the kitchen.

A neighbor of the MacDonalds had been awakened at 3:00 AM the morning of the 17th by her dog barking, a woman screaming, and a child crying. She said she had looked at her clock at that time. She went back to sleep and was again awakened at 3:50 AM by the arrival of the military police at the rear of the MacDonald residence. If the screaming and crying this neighbor heard came from Colette and Kimberly, this would leave a time span of approximately forty-two minutes.

The original call came from MacDonald to the operator in Fayetteville at 3:40 AM, when a man identifying himself as Captain MacDonald, 544 Castle Drive, called, asking for medical aid and the military police, stating that he had been stabbed. The caller then went off the line, but the line remained open. The operator dispatched the call to the military police at Fort Bragg. At 3:42 AM, the caller again came on the line, repeating his request for assistance. However, he made no mention of the condition or the welfare of his wife and children.

To further add suspicion to

MacDonald's story, one of the magazines found under the coffee table in the living room was the March issue of *Esquire*. One of its feature articles was a vivid account of the Sharon Tate murders that had recently occurred in California. A small smear of blood was found on the cover of this magazine. The blood was of the same group as Colette's.

Inasmuch as the physical evidence and facts did not support MacDonald's version of what had taken place, but pointed to him as the person responsible, an Article 32 hearing was initiated to determine if sufficient evidence existed to court martial the Captain for the murders of his wife and children. The subsequent hearing evolved into the longest in military history. It continued from April into October of 1970, culminating in the decision that there was insufficient evidence to courtmartial the Captain. Shortly thereafter, Captain MacDonald was given an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army for reasons of hardship. He moved to California, where he began the practice of medicine.

The Army continued its investigation into the case, pursuing all leads to their conclusion. (The residence at 544 Castle Drive where the crime had occurred had been sealed and padlocked since the murders.) In June, 1971, they again reviewed the physical evidence in an effort to solve the case. It was decided to transport some of the evidence to the FBI laboratory in Washington, D.C. to determine if additional light could be shed on the case. The examination of the evidence was assigned to me.

Bill Ivory, one of the CID investigators, briefed me on the case. He advised me that all of the blood work had been done by their lab at Fort Gordon, but that they were not able to conduct the additional examination they felt might be fruitful. He brought with him the Captain's badly torn blue pajama top which had been found on Colette, the clothing Colette and her daughters had been wearing when they were murdered, the knife and ice pick found under the bush, and the paring knife from the floor of the master bedroom. He wanted to know which of the knives caused the damage to the garments. He also wanted me to determine how many circular puncture holes were present in the torn pajama top as well as their locations, whether these punctures could have been made with the ice pick, and if they were entry or exit holes. He needed to know the initiation point of the tears in the

torn pajama top and if there was blood on the top prior to its being torn.

I conducted the examinations they requested and reported my findings on July 2, 1971, although I did not fully understand the significance of the examinations at that time. The torn pajama top was particularly interesting as it had forty-eight puncture holes in it, most of which were in the back and upper right shoulder areas. The holes conformed in diameter and in their odd oblong shape to that of the ice pick, and could have been made by that instrument. I noted that none of the punctures had torn edges, indicating that the garment was stationary when the punctures were made.

There were two small cuts in the torn top that could have been made by the bent and dull "Geneva Forge" paring knife that was found on the bedroom floor, but the knife was too dull to have made the cuts in the clothing of the deceased victims. However, damage to these garments could have been made by the very sharp and much heavier "Old Hickory" paring knife found outside the house alongside the ice pick.

I was able to determine that there had been blood on the pajama top in at least four locations before it had been torn. The tears were determined to have been initiated by a force applied at the bottom left side of the V in the neckline. The tearing was caused either by a pull down and to the left of the individual wearing the garment, or, possibly, when the wearer turned swiftly to the right while the garment was being held in a tight grip. One other alternative existed: The wearer could have ripped the pajama top by pulling in opposite directions as he held it in his hands.

I noted that some of the puncture holes appeared to be entry holes while configuration of others suggested they were exit holes. At the time I was making my examinations of the garments, I circled each cut or puncture with a grease pencil and numbered each one. I pointed out in my report that each such circle did not necessarily represent a single thrust, since one thrust could pass through several folds of fabric.

I later learned that when the CID received my report they made a comparison of the punctures and cuts in the garments with the cuts and punctures present in the bodies of the individuals wearing them. This led to some additional interesting facts. The torn pajama top MacDonald claimed he was wearing when he was attacked had a total of seventeen punc-

tures in the back, but he had no wounds to that part of his body. There were thirty-one punctures in the right front panel and right shoulder areas, but he had not suffered any wounds to that part of his body either. In fact, the extent of MacDonald's wounds were four to five "prick" marks in his front left shoulder area, two shallow cuts in the left bicep, a wound below the right nipple that slightly penetrated the lung, and a "bump" on his left forehead that had not even broken the skin. The investigators had to conclude that MacDonald was not wearing the pajama top when the forty-eight punctures were made in it.

The number and location of the cuts and punctures in Colette's pajama top, as well as those in the children's garments, indicated that they were wearing their bedclothes when they received their wounds. Colette had a total of sixteen stab wounds to her chest and neck. She had twenty-four deep, penetrating punctures, twenty-one of them in her chest. Kimberly had eight to ten stab wounds to her right neck, and Kristen had a total of seventeen stab wounds, mostly in her back, as well as sixteen "pricks"—all but one in the chest area.

I heard little else about the case until the summer of 1974 when Victor Worheide, a Department of Justice attorney, and Brian Murtagh, a U.S. Army captain assigned to the Fort Bragg CID, paid me a visit in the laboratory. They advised that the CID had completed its investigation and had turned their files over to the Department of Justice for review.

The file was massive, including a total of 699 interviews or reinterviews in thirty different states as well as several foreign countries. The thirteen-volume investigative report had initially been delivered in June, 1972. But after review, additional investigation was requested which culminated with additional reports being submitted in November, 1972, and August, 1973. Vic stated that after an exhaustive review of the case file, it was determined, in May, 1974, that the many unanswered questions in the complex case could only be resolved through the investigative powers of a federal grand jury. One was to be convened during August, in Raleigh, N.C. Both Vic and Brian were convinced that MacDonald had committed the murders.

Brian had worked on the case since its inception and was very familiar with all aspects of the investigation. At that time, I was asked to conduct examinations of hairs recovered in the residence. Hair

samples had not been taken from any of the victims, and the Fort Gordon lab had accepted hairs removed from the clothing of the victims as known samples for comparison. As a result, it was necessary for Brian and me to travel to Long Island to have the bodies exhumed. I, personally, obtained hair samples from each victim's head. It was a necessary but very unpleasant experience for us both. As I looked at those three once beautiful and happy people, I vowed to leave no stone unturned in my attempt to learn exactly what had happened to them—and why.

Brian and I returned to Washington, where I performed the hair examinations. I did not find any hairs that could have come from intruders. Brian, Vic, and I had daily discussions about the case. In September, 1974, Brian and I returned to the crime scene at Fort Bragg. The residence was still sealed and padlocked, remaining as it was when the Fort Gordon crime team and the CID left it in 1971. We spent the better part of a day inside, searching for anything that might have been overlooked. Assuring ourselves that there was nothing that had been missed before, we returned to Washington.

The grand jury had already started its interviews with every person connected with the case. It would eventually interview seventy-five persons, including MacDonald. Little by little and piece by piece, the physical evidence collected by the Fort Gordon team was delivered to me at the laboratory for examination. Brian and I both felt that the solution, if it could be found, lay in this evidence.

Now I was assigned exclusively to the case. The foremost unanswered question was: "Where was the torn pajama top when it received the forty-eight puncture holes?" It had long been suspected by the CID that it had been over the body of Colette when her assailant stabbed her in the chest with the ice pick. If this could be proven, then that portion of MacDonald's story would be shattered.

By this time, I had become obsessed with the case. Miss Shirley Green, one of the top laboratory aides, worked with me. For several weeks we examined the torn top, trying to figure out a solution. It was getting on into October. Time was passing by. The grand jury would not be in session much longer.

We obtained all of the photographs of Colette, showing her body on the floor with the pajama top lying across her chest. We noted that the left sleeve and left front panel trailed off

her side onto the floor. No puncture holes had been found in these portions when it was examined in 1971. We refolded the top to conform to how it appeared in the photos.

There they were—twenty-one puncture holes in the top layer of fabric, the same number of punctures that were in the chest of Colette. Furthermore, the punctures were in two separate groups. One group of five punctures would have appeared in her right chest and the other group of sixteen would have appeared in her left chest. The same pattern and number of puncture holes present in the underlying folds of fabric were then aligned with those on top until all forty-eight holes were accounted for.

The next problem was to place the ice pick and the "Old Hickory" paring knife inside the residence where they could have been used as murder weapons. This we accomplished by comparing bloodstains present on the Hilton Hotel bath mat found lying across Colette's abdomen. Both weapons had apparently been wiped off on the mat. A perfect outline of the knife blade and portions of the handle were clearly visible on the nap. The same was true of the ice pick. Thus, both weapons found outside, and "never before seen" by MacDonald, were effectively placed back in the home.

The two bloody footprints found on the floor of Kristen's room provided us with a more complex problem. Both had been positively identified as having been made by the left foot of MacDonald. Both prints were made while he was exiting that room toward the hall. The puzzler was that the blood in the prints was Colette's, but the only blood pool on the floor of that room was Kristen's. We were certain that Colette had been beaten in this room. Her blood was spattered on the wall, near Kristen's bed, and a large amount was found on the top sheet, but in spite of what appeared to have been considerable bleeding, none of Colette's blood was on the floor. To further complicate the problem, the amount of blood left by MacDonald's footprints was considerable. Where had it come from? How did Colette's body get from Kristen's room back to the master bedroom? These questions seemed critical to the solution of the crime.

The answers, found in the top sheet and bedspread that were on the floor just inside the door of the master bedroom, allowed the facts in the case to finally fall into place. When the sheet was spread out for examination, clear and dis-

tinct bloody impressions leaped out at me: Found on the sheet were prints left by the right and left cuffs of Colette's pajama top and by the torn left sleeve and right sleeve of MacDonald's pajama top. There also were what appeared to be imprints made by a bare left shoulder, a chin, and two hands. Further, all the blood on the sheet was Colette's—with the exception of two small spots identified as coming from Kimberly.

An examination of the bedspread found with the sheet revealed the dried remains of a large puddle of Colette's blood, with thick crusts on it. Clearly, it had been the source of the blood found in the footprints on the floor in Kristen's room. After Colette had been brutally beaten in Kristen's room with the club, her body had come to rest on the child's bed, bleeding profusely from the severe lacerations to her head. Her assailant then took the sheet and bedspread from the master bedroom, returned to Kristen's room, and threw the bedspread to the floor. Still wearing the torn pajama top, he picked Colette up from the bed, placing her on the spread. Her bleeding head wounds caused a puddle of blood to form.

As the murderer picked Colette up from the bed, a large amount of wet blood was transferred to the torn pajama top. The sheet was thrown around the body and it was picked up and carried to the master bedroom. In doing this, the murderer stepped with his left foot in the puddle of blood on the bedspread. This resulted in the two bloody footprints on the floor as he exited the room. It was also at this time that the impressions of the cuffs of both pajama tops, as well as those of the bare left shoulder and the bloody hands, were transferred to the sheet.

Colette was dumped on the floor of the master bedroom, where she was found. The bedspread was retrieved from Kristen's room and, together with the sheet, thrown near Colette's body. Colette was struck again with the club and repeatedly stabbed with the paring knife. It was at this time that the torn, bloody pajama top was placed over her body.

In putting all of the known physical facts together with MacDonald's story, the following chain of events was perceived to have occurred. MacDonald stated that he watched a television show, after which he went to the bedroom to retire for the night. There, he found Kristen asleep on his side of the bed. In picking her up to take her to her own

room, he noticed that she had wet the bed.

All that seemed to be the truth. But here facts conflicted with his narration. We perceived that he woke Colette first, demanding that she change the bed linen. When he returned to the master bedroom, Colette was in the process of changing sheets. She had already removed the spread and top sheet and dropped them on the floor near the door to the hall.

The two became involved in a domestic quarrel which erupted into violence. Who struck the first blow only the participants know, but Colette was struck in the face, possibly with MacDonald's fist, causing her mouth and nose to bleed. This was when her blood got on his pajama top. (This was before the top was torn.)

The altercation grew more violent. Perhaps Colette tried to stab MacDonald with the dull and bent "Geneva Forge" paring knife found on the floor. We had proven that it never had been sticking out of her chest as he claimed. It had only one small drop of blood on it. Perhaps to defend himself from the knife, he grabbed the club from his open closet. By now the battle was raging.

Kimberly, awakened by the shouting and screaming, went to the bedroom to see what was happening. She was near or just inside the doorway when she was either accidentally or purposely struck a severe blow to the left side of her head that crushed her skull. She fell to the floor at the entrance to the room, her blood landing on the door jamb, the floor, and the sheet lying nearby.

Colette, fighting for her life, tore MacDonald's pajama top, causing numerous sewing threads and yarns to scatter to the floor. She eventually was knocked unconscious and fell to the floor of the bedroom. Believing both Colette and Kimberly to be dead, MacDonald's first impulse was to flee, but when no neighbors appeared to be disturbed by the noise, he began to form a plan to cover his crime. The Sharon Tate murders were still fresh in everyone's mind. Why not blame everything on "hippies"?

He was still wearing the torn pajama top, although at this time it was not too bloody. He picked up Kimberly, carried her to her bed and covered her body. Evidently to reinforce his story, he struck her again on her head with the club. This accounted for the blood spatters found on the headboard and pillow of her bed. The "Old Hickory" paring knife MacDon-

ald obtained from the kitchen. He then went to Kristen's room and stabbed her to death in her bed and covered her body as he had Kimberly's. We determined that he was, at the time, still wearing the torn pajama top, since sewing threads and yarns from it were found under the covers in both children's beds. Perhaps at this time he returned to Kimberly's room and stabbed her in the right side of her neck.

In the meantime, Colette regained consciousness and went to the hall bathroom to examine her injuries. Drops of her blood were found on the left side of the sink. From there, she went to Kristen's room where she was surprised by MacDonald who again beat her viciously with the club, severely lacerating her head and breaking both of her arms as she attempted to ward off his blows. Knocked unconscious, she came to rest on Kristen's little bed. Using the sheet and bedspread as described earlier, MacDonald carried Colette's body back to the master bedroom.

All that remained then was the matter of setting the scene to conform to the "Hippie" story. Now bare from the waist up, MacDonald obtained the ice pick and pricked Kristen with it to give the impression of multiple weapons and assailants. He returned to the master bedroom and stabbed Colette furiously in the chest and neck, twenty-four times. Twenty-one thrusts passed through the pajama top he had previously placed over her chest.

We believe that at this time MacDonald was wearing a pair of surgical gloves he had put on prior to stabbing Kristen. Several finger portions were found in the master bedroom, though the gloves themselves were never found. His hands protected by the gloves, he printed the inscription *PIG* on the headboard of the bed, using blood from Colette's body.

His next move was to set up the living room. The coffee table was eased (rather than knocked) over, which caused the magazines to fall under the edge of the table top. He did not think carefully enough to scatter the sewing threads and yarns—or any of his blood—around the couch. These were serious errors on his part. Errors that first made his story suspect.

It was now time to inflict his own injuries. This he did in the hall bathroom as he stood on a step stool in front of the sink and mirror. He made a couple of pricks with the ice pick to his shoulder, and then stabbed himself under the right nipple.

This was when drops of his group "B" blood fell to the right side of the sink and onto the step stool.

His initial call for aid was made from the master bedroom, but then he recalled that the box of surgical gloves had been left out. He rushed to the kitchen to hide them under the sink and, as he bent over, the eight drops of blood fell from his chest wound to the floor. His call for aid was then continued from the kitchen telephone. Then he returned to the master bedroom where he collapsed.

I testified before the federal grand jury regarding my findings in the physical evidence and, as a result, MacDonald was indicted on three counts of murder in January, 1975. The government was fully prepared to go to trial in the spring of that year, but appeals on the part of the defense all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court delayed trial until the summer of 1979.

By then I had retired from the FBI, but I still followed the case and I retained all of my laboratory notes to keep them fresh in my mind. After a lengthy seven-week trial, the jury deliberated only six-and-a-half hours before returning verdicts of guilty of murder in the second degree in the deaths of Colette and Kimberly, guilty of murder in the first degree in the death of Kristen. MacDonald was immediately sentenced to serve three consecutive life sentences.

However, his attorneys continued their legal maneuvering and managed, finally, to have the verdict reversed by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, on the basis that he had been denied a speedy trial. He was freed on bond and remained so until the Supreme Court reversed the Fourth Circuit Court and he was sent back to prison. Additional appeals and motions were made, but were rejected by the courts.

MacDonald remains in prison. He still has a following of loyal supporters who feel that he is innocent, despite the fact that anyone with knowledge of the physical evidence knows he is the only one who could have perpetrated the crime.

Human witnesses to a crime can—and frequently do—change their stories for a variety of reasons. They can be bought, sold, harrassed, intimidated, threatened, or just plain mistaken. Physical evidence, however, is never wrong. The torn pajama top, the sewing threads and yarns, the bloodstained sheet and bath mat, the overturned coffee table, the blood stains and spatters throughout

the house—all had a story to tell. Their mute evidence was with us when the crime occurred, remaining to tell the same story today, years after it happened. It was their unchangeable testimony that exposed what actually took place at 544 Castle Drive, Ft. Bragg, N.C. that fateful early morning of February 17, 1970. They were the *silent witnesses.* ST

THE BLUE ROOM

Police officers around the world live in or near the jurisdictions in which they work. At the end of their tour of duty, they go home and carry on the same activities as the rest of the population.

This is not so in the tiny country of Israel. A police officer in Jerusalem, for example, might live in the city of Haifa, far to the west, in the southern part of the country called the Negev, or even in the Golan Heights to the north.

It would be impractical for such an officer to go home at the end of his shift and return in the morning fully rested. The long drive would adversely affect his job performance.

To accommodate such police officers—Jews, Christians, and Arabs—the Jerusalem Police Department has built a hotel not far from police headquarters. Called a *beth hashotel,* the hotel provides living and eating facilities at a very nominal rate, according to Captain Moshe Shochat, the hotel's ranking officer.

Prior to the particular Sabbath each officer observes, he leaves for his home in time to celebrate this holy day with his family. "It works out very well," Captain Shochat said. "We are adequately staffed at all times to handle any situation that may occur. At the same time, the men can rest when they are off duty and still be with their families on their particular holy days."

Harry Squires

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BETTY REN WRIGHT

Betty Ren Wright has been a writer for most of her adult life. She sold her first short story in 1952, and from that time her adult fiction has appeared in a variety of magazines, including ***Redbook, Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal, Cosmopolitan, Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine,*** *and* ***Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine.*** *Many of these stories have been reprinted in anthologies and foreign publications.*

In THE LAZARUS LIGHT, Betty Wright demonstrates her power to arouse the emotions, intrigue the imagination, and entertain the spirit.

THE LAZARUS LIGHT

I remember from little-girlhood an embroidered sentence on a bedroom wall: *He is not dead, he is only in another room.* A soothing thought to my grandmother, perhaps, if the embroidery and the wall were indeed hers, but not soothing to me. In my imagination, the unidentified *He* was wrapped in yards of bandages, like Lazarus in my Bible Stories picture-book, and I certainly didn't want him lurking in a nearby room. The raising of Lazarus always seemed to me a doubtful blessing, anyway. What would he look like? Sound like? Smell like!

My opinion of that particular miracle hasn't changed. When someone dies, the world moves on without him, not eventually, but at once. Five minutes, one minute, even thirty seconds later, the adjustments, the reconciling, the rearrangements have begun. Within an hour, the place he held has been reshaped, and if he were to return then, there would be new adjustments to be made. This is not as harsh as it may sound. I am not speaking of grief or of for-

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getting. I am talking about a kind of inevitability of movement—as unstoppable as the turning of the globe.

This conviction feeds my ambition. If Mr. Mackey were to die tomorrow, I could take his place myself, quite easily. But Mr. Mackey is very healthy. I wish him dead a hundred times a day, but, no matter what the songwriter says, wishing does not make it so. Flu epidemics rage, the earth convulses underfoot, storms thrust at us with furious fingers, but nothing hurts Mr. Mackey. Every day, his wide flat feet slap down the hallways of my mind, and I picture him seated behind a mammoth desk issuing orders to a dozen cringing secretaries. Actually, his desk is smallish, formica-topped, and I am his only secretary. But the spirit of my vision is accurate. He is Olympian, and I am a mortal, scurrying to please.

"Mr. Mackey," I say in the morning, bringing his coffee, an imaginary envelope of arsenic pressed against my palm. "Mr. Mackey, I went to a feminist meeting last night. They say a woman should never assume the role of servant in a business situation."

"Bunch of damn freaks," Mr. Mackey snarls, walking close to a window that looks out over the city twenty-three stories below. I don't know whether anyone has determined what force is required to propel a human being through that thick plate glass, but I fear it would take more strength than I can muster.

"Feminists aren't freaks," I tell him. "Many women are treated unfairly in our society, Mr. Mackey."

"Women are treated the way they deserve to be treated." He comes back to his desk and drinks deeply from the cup I have poured for him. *Someday,* I think, *someday. . . .*

But Mr. Mackey thrives on my hate, blooms in the light of my contempt. He appears to be beyond reach. If Mr. Mackey and I were swimming eighty feet underwater, and I reached out and cleverly disconnected his breathing apparatus, Mr. Mackey would begin breathing the water itself and would swim on ahead of me, kicking bubbles in my face.

"Are you waiting for anything in particular?" he asks. "If

not, consider yourself liberated, Miss Johnson, and get out."

That was my life—burdened by anger and without any way to escape it—until my sister gave me the candle. My sister is an innocent. She bought the waxen soldier because he reminded her of our trip to England, long ago, when we were in our twenties and full of joy. He reminds *me* of Mr. Mackey. The puffy pink face and the pouter pigeon front are unmistakable. What shall I do with a candle that looks like Mr. Mackey?

I light it. The wick glows bright, and flame leaps from the soldier's bearskin hat. Almost imperceptibly, the pink face changes as heat dips into the skull. I sit in the thin light, dreaming, remembering the words of the speaker at the feminist meeting: *We must brave anything. We must live on dangerous frontiers. We must let nothing stand in our way.*

The fat face sags into a frown; the soldier is being destroyed. My sister will be distressed when she visits me again. He is obviously expensive; she would not expect me to burn him, ever. I am enraged suddenly at how, even *in absentia*, Mr. Mackey is contemptuous of the feelings of others. I blow out the flame.

The telephone is ringing when I arrive at the office the next morning. It is Mrs. Mackey, her voice quivering as she describes the horrors of the night—the terrible headache that attacked dear Edward just after dinner, the pain beyond belief that lasted an hour or more and left him too weak to get out of bed this morning. Can I, somehow, struggle through the day without his guidance?

I write a letter outlining a sales plan I have been turning over in my mind for weeks. I read it over and know that it is right. I make thirty copies for our sales representatives and send them out over Mr. Mackey's signature. A carbon copy goes to our central office in New York. I sit at his desk to sign the letters, and when I'm through I look out over the city twenty-three stories below. It is mine.

The candle is on the coffee table when I get home, frowning fiercely in response to my greeting. It has been a good

day—an incredible day—but as I look at the frown, I am suddenly cautious. The matches lie in the ashtray at the soldier's side, and I finger them longingly. Still, if Mr. Mackey disappears from this world today, tomorrow, or even the next day, the company will send a man to replace him. Nothing will change. If he is at home and ill for a month, however, and during all that time things go as well or better than ever, what then? Will a head office, even one crowded with male chauvinists, be able to ignore a secretary who pulls off such a coup?

I put aside the matches and go into my bedroom to find the pearl-headed hatpin that was my mother's treasure. When I return, the round pink face is suffused with fear and hate. *Don't get upset, Mr. Mackey,* I tell him. *We shall proceed slowly on to new frontiers.*

Just before bedtime, I call Mrs. Mackey to inquire after the health of dear Edward. He has, she says, developed a dreadful pain in his left foot. Mrs. Mackey fears gout.

My sales plan is an immediate success. Within a week, I write to headquarters recommending an increase in sales quotas, and, in another week, an increase in bonuses. There are phone calls approving both from a vice-president who is annoyed to find Mr. Mackey out of the office. I cover for him, as he has sent word I must. The time for revelation has not come, but I can feel in my very bones that irresistible turning of the earth on its axis.

I go to another feminist meeting. It is the most exciting so far. I feel myself lifted and carried along by the spirit of my sisters. What is there we cannot do, if we are daring enough? What is there to fear? I work into the small hours of the morning preparing a chart that will show the central office, in vivid form, what has been accomplished in the last month. It is three-thirty when I finish, and I fall into bed exhausted. I sleep badly. The excitement, the pressures, the need to prove myself are taking their toll.

The next morning, sitting at Mr. Mackey's desk to put the finishing touches on the chart, I burst into tears. It is ridicu-

lous, of course—*female*. I am overwhelmed by fear that the head office will not believe the evidence. Soon I plan to "confess" that Mr. Mackey has not been near the office for a month. But what if he is able to save himself in some way? He could lie. He could tell them he had been in touch every day and had given the orders for every step I have taken. I see then that before I tell about his absence, I must take precautions. I must make sure that he is never able to tell them anything.

I sit at the coffee table and watch the flame lick upward from Mr. Mackey's face. Waxen tears run down, filling in some of the holes made by my mother's hatpin. I am lost in contemplation. When the doorbell rings, it is like the breaking off of a sacred ceremony.

My sister. In all the years of our lives, our moods have rarely coincided. One exception was the trip to Europe, when our sister-souls burned as brightly and merrily as the flame burns now in Mr. Mackey's head. Tonight, in my hour of greatest satisfaction, she is angry and hurt. I have not called her for a month. We have only each other, yet I am cruelly indifferent. She sees the flaming candle and bursts into tears. The candle cost her three days' lunch money; she never dreamed I would burn it. I am—she can hardly bring herself to say it—an unnatural person.

I wait for her to go. I am sorry she has seen the candle, since there is no way to explain to her what its burning means to me. She believes I am rejecting her and the good times we once had together. When she blows out the flame and snatches up the soldier, I cry out so fiercely that for a moment she hesitates. Then she runs from the apartment with the candle in her hand.

The next morning Mr. Mackey is at his desk when I arrive. His face is pale and pouchy, but he is obviously full of energy. Files are spread all over the office, and he is immersed in the correspondence and sales reports of the last month. When I come in, he looks up and stares at me as if I were an interesting but repellent insect crossing his carpet.

At last he speaks. "How old are you, Miss Johnson?"

I tell him.

"A difficult age at which to find a new position, I imagine—especially if one's employer of twenty-some years refuses to give references."

I agree.

"Then let's hope it won't be necessary for you to go job-hunting." His voice shakes with rage. "This last month has been a nightmare, but I feel quite healthy now, and I believe I've made a complete recovery. It appears that in my absence there have been some changes made here . . ." His face turns deep mauve. ". . . but I'm willing to forget your interference and impertinence this once. We will never discuss it again. Is that understood?"

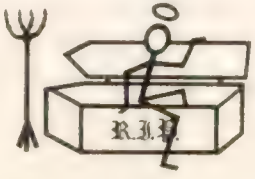
I nod. I am trembling, too.

"Then get the damn coffee."

I hurry to plug in the pot.

Now, in the evening, I often go to visit my sister, because I am sorry I have hurt her. We sit and talk about the old days, and we never mention what happened that night in my apartment. But, no matter what Mr. Mackey says, that month can hardly be forgotten. For one thing, my sister has patched and painted the soldier candle until, except for his hat, he is almost like new. And she has put him under a tall glass bell on her coffee table—a sly reproach to let me know she has not forgiven my indifference.

Mr. Mackey glares at me through the glass. *I am not dead,* he sneers, *I am only in another room.* And my sister brushes the glass lightly with her fingertips, indicating that she will keep him safe forever. ST



SHAUN USHER

The new SAINT Magazine is pleased to introduce Shaun Usher, a British author who is practically unknown here in the States. His powerful narrative style is particularly well suited to this tale of spy and counterspy in a battle of wits, coming incredibly close to some real-life situations in the murky netherworld of espionage.

The ultimatum is clear and decisive. As one antagonist warns the other: If you hope to survive, you must . . .

TALK FOR YOUR LIFE

" . . . a lot of trouble." The voice had been far away, echoing as if delivered through a megaphone. Now, as John Brierly sensed that he was falling—but upwards—back to full consciousness, the message took on sharp focus, acquiring meaning.

"You're in a lot of trouble, my friend," Rex Collard repeated with gusto, belying the sentence's ending.

Brierly discovered that he was outdoors, on grass. A seagull cackled inanely just overhead, having ridden the updraft from a cliff face that couldn't be far off, since Brierly could hear waves crashing at its base. The gull's plumage was dazzling white. Cold ruby-rimmed eyes were startling by contrast. Dipping a dismissive wing, it skimmed away.

"Lovely," Brierly mouthed, his face so lacking in color that it was hard to tell where his grey beard began.

"Never mind that," 'Wrecks' Collard snorted. 'Wrecks' was his research station nickname. Collard, the newest recruit, was supposed to be a statistician; nobody knew quite what for. The pun on his name was a badge of unpopularity earned by his nosiness and a paradoxical readiness to take umbrage when his own role was questioned. He was capa-

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ble of chumminess, however. After all, he had pestered Brierly into weekending at his South Coast cottage.

Head clearing, Brierly thought he understood. He'd tripped during a pre-lunch stroll, stunning himself. So much for preserving one's cover.... Good old Johnny Brierly, brilliant, or thereabouts, but no snob. Notorious for seeing the best in everyone, even obnoxious Rex. He had not wanted to spend off-duty time with Collard, but his pattern had to be followed to the last.

Wondering why it was taking him so long to stand up, Brierly eased his shoulders off the ground, levering on his elbows and....

Shock rather than fear made him flinch, though what he saw was frightening enough. A crouching monster hulked black against the morning light.

Swallowing dryly, he shaded his eyes and looked again. Better this time, but still outlandish. The monster's face, for instance. Brierly's first nightmare impression had been of something six months overdue for the grave, with blind white worms crawling down putrid flesh. Those worms were simply sweat tracks in the black stuff smeared over cheeks and forehead. Brierly's pulse steadied.

White, untreated patches of skin around the eyes made the soldier resemble a human panda, clownish. He wore dirty olive-drab denims, a steel helmet riding on his shoulder like a poor imitation of Quasimodo's hunch. An assault rifle, butt resting on the sheep-grazed turf, lay against his knee as he squatted on booted heels. From the sound of him, he wasn't bright. "You ought to get that seen to, mister." The tone was absurdly domestic, at odds with uniform and rifle.

Brierly, who wanted to chuckle, was reminded of a nanny grumbling over her charge's unimportant bruise.

Following the direction signaled by the soldier's gaze, Brierly cried out and jerked involuntarily. Immediately, excruciating pain clamped a phantom hand on his thighbone and twisted viciously.

Sweat pouring, heart racing, he stared at the wound.

Somebody had cut his slacks open. The hole, a neat circle of blue between right knee and upper thigh, was punctuated by an ugly brown-red disc that had wept blood.

"You've been shot," Rex Collard said, impatiently.

"Not my fault!" the soldier blurted out, defensively. "Red flags were flying, must have been. They always are for an exercise, never mind an exercise with live ammunition." Every few words were punctuated by an obscenity.

"Never mind that." Although far less physically imposing than the soldier, Collard was the bigger man. "Get back to your squad and keep your mouth shut. There'll be no Court of Inquiry nonsense. You're off the hook."

Even in pain and panic, Brierly was surprised at Collard's brisk authority.

"Easy for you to say," the soldier sullenly challenged.

"I *do* say." Collard held up a gaudy striped oblong plastic case that reflected the sun. "Here's my I.D."

The soldier's lips moved fractionally as he studied the card. His flustered snapping to attention made him stumble. "Sorry, sir! About what happened. . . ."

"It never did happen. Least said, soonest mended. But start blabbing and we may not be able to keep the lid on it. Savvy?"

"Too right! I mean, yessir!" Pathetically relieved, the soldier saluted.

"Off you go then." Collard, faintly amused, more than faintly contemptuous, returned the identity card to his ginger-colored sports jacket as boots thudded on turf and the soldier marched off.

"For God's sake, Rex, get help!"

Collard brought out a boiled sweet, the tiger-striped kind, and unwrapped it with the loving, greedy eagerness of a connoisseur stripping a Havana. "Well then. . . ." The bastard *was* amused, and not just at that trigger-happy oaf.

"Rex, he shot me. I'm . . . hurt." Brierly tried to sit up again. It was a mistake, and he screamed. The gulls answered mockingly.

Collard, hitching his corduroy slacks up at the knees, sat

cross-legged on the turf. He savored the luscious sweet and rolled it to the other side of his mouth before he advised, "Lie still, there's a good chap. Don't want to start the bleeding again."

"You're mad, crazy! Don't sit there, run for help! You should have sent that man. . . ." Brierly trailed off. "You told him not to say anything."

"Nor will he." Purposely misunderstanding, Collard was reassuring on the point. "Oh, stop being such a baby, John. It's a pleasant day. It might have been raining, you know. You could do with a blanket, granted, but you're reasonably warmly dressed. Think of those poor squaddies wounded in the Falklands show—lying in the rain and snow and mud. D'you think *they* were forever complaining?"

He was insane. Shaken, his face pale, John Brierly fought not to join him.

Stop, think this through. Though this stretch of clifftop was remote, they *were* in England, no more than 15 miles from a major town. People in England didn't get shot without repercussions.

Providing he lay absolutely still and shut out constant messages of pain and nausea, he didn't feel so bad. Collard, obviously, had suffered some kind of sadistic brainstorm and wanted to witness suffering and groveling. But Rex Collard wasn't the only man in the world. Eventually, somebody would come along and. . . .

"That's better," Collard said, making disgusting noises with the sweet. "Tell me, John, how much d'you remember?"

Brierly found it a good question. He reflected on it for a moment. Victoria Station the previous evening, he remembered that. And nearly missing the train, getting a little drunk in the restaurant car—because the thought of 48 hours with Rex was a daunting prospect.

A blank after that. Then he remembered an elderly station wagon with varnished wood trim, Collard at the wheel. But the journey to the cottage did not register. Nor anything after that.

Humor the madman. Answer his question.

"Not too much of today, Rex. I suppose we came here . . . for a stroll? God! It's some kind of firing range? Army training area?" Brierly forced a smile. "Better be getting back for lunch, eh? You go on ahead."

Rex Collard scrubbed a knuckle over his toothbrush moustache. "Idiot! I wasn't talking about today. Yes, it is a training area, but, despite Private Whoever's lurid claims, the red flags *weren't* flying, and the public-access gate that should have been padlocked was open. Else I wouldn't have brought you here. I'm not a fool."

Alarmed by his testiness, Brierly soothed, "Nobody's saying it's your fault, Rex."

Collard waved that aside. "You probably don't recall anything about coming here—limited amnesia is par for the course with gunshot trauma." He chuckled grimly. "Not like the films, John. None of that applying your own tourniquet and jogging on. Giving you gyp, I shouldn't wonder!"

Totally out of his mind. Though lucid in a hideous way.

"Pay attention," Collard nagged. "Memory is the topic under discussion. For example, do you remember being approached, recruited? Who are your contacts, past and present?" He leaned closer. "You're supposed to be going over soon, so what route was suggested, what arrangements made?" He cocked his head to one side. "Really, I want to know everything about your being a traitor."

To Brierly, it was as severe a shock as realising that his flesh had been penetrated. Or discovering pain more intense than he had dreamed. He fainted.

Brierly wasn't sure how long he had been watching it—the glittering jewel of a mile-high jetliner scribing its thin white trail across the sky.

He felt flushed. His leg throbbed, his skin burned. And—fresh jolt in a lengthening list—he was alone, deserted.

"Help!" The first shout was his last, because its vibration roused the fiend drowsing alongside that buried bullet.

"Pass out as often as you like, you'll still come round." Rex Collard had simply changed sides. He was on Brierly's

left now, three discarded sweet papers suggesting the amount of lapsed time. "Who recruited you, John? What was the inducement? Vanity, blackmail, ideology?"

Collard was so certain, obviously knew so much, that Brierly decided there was no point in a blanket denial. By the same token, there was no way of explaining anything.

"Get help," Brierly snarled. "If anything happens to me, you'll never get your bloody questions answered."

Collard was unruffled. "Not true, John. Once in hospital, all the trumps pass to you. You'll be safe, in every sense of the term. The point being that you haven't *done* anything yet, not the big thing, at least. You haven't defected—rather a grand word for scuttling off behind the Iron Curtain with a body of stolen research material." He brooded over unwrapping another sweet before dropping it back in his pocket. "Defector, agent. Sounds better than thief or traitor."

"You bloody little fascist, Collard." John Brierly was surprised and elated by the manner in which anger acted as a makeshift anaesthetic. "Abuse and torture, these are the precious freedoms you get so pious and pompous about."

"If you say so," Collard assented amiably. "Keep that up, and I'll let you die. That bullet needs to be fished out. You've lost blood. The wound could be turning septic. Hardly a winning hand—so let's get on with it, for your sake. Who recruited you? When did it happen?"

Brierly deliberately rekindled scorn and rage. "When? From the moment I started working things out for myself. Learned to detest the smugness and decay over here, the disease of the West as a whole. Social injustice, reckless greed and bullying, twisted hatred of the Soviet Union, the world's best and only hope for peace!"

Running out of breath, he lay panting.

"Bless my soul." Collard sniggered and shook his head. "In other words, you went looking for *them*. Who did you find?"

"Get lost!"

"No, you're the lost one, *Professor* Brierly," Collard corrected him. "You're not due home until Sunday night and . . ." He elaborately consulted his watch. ". . . here we are,

with Saturday hardly begun. Which is to say that you'll have died of gunshot wounds or exposure at least half a day before anyone will start asking where you are.

John Brierly stared at him. Not mad, after all. Or rather, madder than ever. A ruthless bigot.

"Why d'you think I've been making a nuisance of myself in a non-job for the past six months?" Collard demanded. "To keep an eye on you. Both eyes, both ears. First it was leaks. Then there were signals that leaking wasn't fast enough for you. You were ready to take the plunge."

"Security," Brierly whispered.

"That's me. One of those pantomime characters who couldn't find a spy if you gave me a road map and a name and address." Collard smiled grimly. "Only I've found you, my friend, and I'm going to *get* you, one way or the other." There was a gasping tone to his voice. John Brierly wasn't the only angry man. "I think you're contemptible, worthless morally—whatever your value to the other side.

"This morning was an accident, a fluke. If you want the truth, I got you down here to pump you full of drugs and wring you out. Now, there's a better way."

Collard removed a tape recorder he had been carrying in his jacket pocket and laid it on the turf between them. "It's very simple. You can be noble as hell and refuse to talk. I rather hope you'll take that line, John. In which case, you die. Or you can tell me everything—names, places, promises, deals. Then I walk a mile down that track, and within fifteen minutes you're in an ambulance."

Thinking swiftly—he was immeasurably more intelligent than Rex Collard; that was his only edge—Brierly now realised that he must talk to survive, must say things near enough the truth to be satisfying, but sufficiently distant and false to be useless.

Genuine pain and its attendant confusion allowed him to pause, be discursive, make obvious mistakes about dates and locations. However, his answers had to *sound* right.

He had no compunction about naming Konstantin Tardenko and acknowledging his crucial help after their ar-

ranged meetings at Helsinki and New York United Nations seminars. Brierly hadn't encountered the old man since the 1970s. He might well be dead by now. Certainly, General Tardenko of the KGB was no longer on the active list.

The name and description had rung bells with Collard, however. At one stage, he dropped the ploddingly methodical litany of questions to mumble, "It makes a fellow believe in providence, John—divine intervention. Enough to send me to church tomorrow, I kid you not."

Worried over dimming vision and a throbbing head, Brierly groaned, "What the hell are you rambling about *now*?"

Collard looked surprised. "You getting shot, of course. I couldn't have done it. To many wets and milksops in charge. It wouldn't have been on."

Something in Collard's eyes made Brierly curse weakly. "But you arranged it!"

"No." The other man was regretful. "I wish I could, for people like you. Anyway, it happened, thank goodness."

Time for more bait, a pinch of poison.... "You may have won, Collard, but you've ruined yourself in the process. Denying me medical treatment, that's torture. I'll report this. You're finished."

Collard fumbled to stop the tape. "A self-confessed traitor bleating because the naughty man stopped him doing huge damage to this country? You'll be on a sticky wicket, John." Yet, he appeared troubled.

Brierly, eyes shut, hid a smirk. It all helped to plant the conviction that his confession was genuine.

"Where were we?" The tape jabbered for a moment as Collard ran it back, then forward. "Right, your dead letter boxes were changed in the summer of 1980. Why?"

Although he answered without further protest, Brierly carefully avoided giving meaningful information. When dead letter boxes had been in a South London park, he referred to a North London one. He moved the Chelsea bistro to Earls Court, and a Bayswater squash and sauna club was transferred to Reading.

Brierly didn't say anything about Piggy. They'd been at

prep school together and had forged the friendship anew at university. Rex Collard had talked of Brierly's holding all the trumps, once he reached a hospital. Piggy was the ace.

With calculated force, Collard prodded Brierly's shoulder, using the blunt end of his ballpen. "You're drifting off again, John. This chap whose workname was Julian—silly name—he had to be an embassy wallah, right?"

"If . . . you say so. He had no accent, if that's what you mean. No snow on his boots. . . ." Brierly was exaggerating his growing dizziness, words slurring.

"All right, that's enough to be going on with." Collard rubbed his moustache. "Now, grit your teeth. It'll only hurt for a minute." Brierly's eyelids flicked up. "No. . . ."

When he came round, he realised that Collard had dragged him to a shallow depression between some furze bushes.

Collard, pale, spoke gruffly. "I was gentle as could be, damn it. You're fine." He didn't seem convinced.

"Get help," Brierly screamed.

"All in good time. I'm not buying a pig in a poke. You could be telling me anything to trick your way to hospital. I have to check a few items by phone. Then we'll see."

He was gone before Brierly could protest further. It hadn't occurred to him that the other man would be so callously cautious.

Unlike Rex Collard, the birdwatchers really were gentle as could be.

They stumbled on Brierly within minutes of Collard's departure—a scholarly youth in plaid shirt and shorts; his mirror-image father, tanned nose even peeling in the same place; and the son's fiancée, a blessedly competent student nurse. Best of all, they had Defense Ministry clearance to study gulls, and had brought their Land Rover with a heavy load of alloy poles and camouflage material to construct a hide.

The girl gave Brierly sips of water, holding his hand as the men lifted him aboard the Land Rover. With some of the ma-

terial they'd brought folded into an oblong pad, and the older man easing the four-wheel-drive vehicle along the track at walking pace, it was miraculously comfortable.

However, Brierly, abstractedly soothed by the girl's perfume and the upper curves of honey-tanned breasts in a summery blouse, was still worried.

He'd introduced himself—they'd never heard of him—and given a misleading, while fairly truthful, account of his mishap. Rex Collard was edited out of it. But throughout the short drive, Brierly was fearful that Collard would spot the Land Rover and intercept it. The man was obsessed, ruthless, and even witnesses might not daunt him.

The girl gave Brierly a little more water, cool hand cradling the nape of his neck. "Not long now," she crooned. He glided away into unknowingness.

It was evening when Brierly came round again. The setting sun glowed pinkly through the nylon curtains that made a roofless tent around the bed. His blue-and-white-striped pajama jacket smelled of fresh laundry. Splinted and heavily bandaged, his leg was outside the covers, pain gone.

A pretty face peeked through the curtains and seemed surprised to find him awake. "Sorry," the little nurse chirped, starting to retreat.

Huskily, tasting the sickly sweet dregs of anaesthetic, Brierly called, "Don't go! Where is this?"

She stepped into the enclosure. "Morway General. It's Southampton near enough, the outskirts. Sorry about the noise, Professor. We'll get you into a private room tomorrow, I promise." Her almond-shaped eyes twinkled at him.

He became aware of sounds: subdued conversation, peevish coughing, occasional scrapes and rattles as chairs were moved around the ward—visiting time in a busy hospital. Triumph prickled like a mild electric charge. *Once in hospital, you'll hold all the trumps.*

But did he? Brierly faltered, "Is . . . anyone waiting for me?" He couldn't ask if he were under arrest and guarded.

"Sorry, but it is the weekend. We phoned your home, but

nobody was there. I'm sure all your colleagues will be in touch when they hear about you on Monday."

He beamed at her. Delightful girl! Luck was a swing, ill fortune alternating with good. Rex Collard had lost him for the moment.

The girl, warned by a squeaking noise outside, half-turned and said, "Take that away, don't bother Professor Brierly." And to him: "It's the telephone trolley. We bring it round twice a day for patients."

His heart lurched. "Actually, I'd love to make a call." He mustered his charm. "A very quick one. It'll help me sleep sounder," he wheedled.

"You will anyway," she said tartly. "We see to that." A dubious pout. "You're supposed to be resting. And what about money? I don't carry change on the ward. . . ."

"I can make it a collect call. Five minutes, I promise." He was already working out a suitably ambiguous warning to Piggy. They'd always taken agonising care over contact. Now Piggy must sever all connections.

The little nurse tossed her head. "Well, maybe." But she came back with the telephone cart and plugged it in behind the bed. To Brierly's relief, she didn't linger.

"Piggy? John. Sorry to disrupt your weekend, but I've had the most absurd mishap and it's too good an anecdote to keep. . . ."

"Hold on." Piggy spoke pleasantly, making Brierly regret his own strained, stilted approach. "You must have the wrong number. I don't know you." The phone went dead. Piggy had hung up on him.

This time the curtains rattled all the way back. John Brierly was so appalled by Piggy's prompt disavowal that it took him a second to register the scene.

There was no general ward, no hospital at all. Just a long, vaulted space with arched windows, grimy and bleared, at the far end. Victorian, Brierly noted dully. A derelict chapel or school—hence the ample space.

The flawless ceiling was a sham, a section of plasterboard suspended above the curtained cubicle. Phantom patients

and visitors still murmured and coughed and shifted their chairs until a burly man in pinstripes and regimental tie appeared, switched off a tape recorder by the door, and started coiling its unplugged lead around his arm. The last time Brierly had seen the intruder, he'd been in combat fatigues, face blackened.

The Eurasian nurse wheeled the telephone cart away, and the birdwatching group busied themselves dismantling stereo speakers ranged along the wall. Absurdly, Brierly couldn't bring himself to speak. They acted as if he had ceased to exist and was merely another of their props.

Sitting appropriately in a director's chair that had been hidden by the curtains, Collard said flatly, "The comedy is over. You might as well get up, John. Unwrap those bandages and see for yourself. Nothing the matter with you. You haven't been shot."

Seated comfortably in the passenger side of the automobile, John Brierly couldn't stop his hand from stealing along his thigh, confirming the wholeness there. Yet he'd *known* he was hit and in pain....

"Drugs to prepare your mind, then a session with our tame expert. The rest was posthypnotic suggestion." It would have been easier if Collard had gloated, but he was offhand, merely tiredly satisfied.

"We had to expose your guru, the man higher up who steered you to the Russians and kept you close to vulnerable areas. Sir Mark—Piggy—was a likely runner. So you could spin me all the rubbish you liked ... providing you duly hit the panic button for him afterwards. He was a favorite, but confirmation was vital.

"Once you were programmed and the stage set, there was little chance that you *wouldn't* act as you did," he added, almost pityingly. "If not at the 'hospital,' then soon afterwards."

"You bloody monster, you ought to be locked up. You've got nothing against me, nothing you can prove. Intention, inclination, that's all. My so-called statement was fiction, and

obtained under duress at that."

Collard made a face. "General Tardenko will be hurt at being called fictional, but no matter. Yes, you got away with it. However, you'll never be involved in government research again. Your resignation letter's waiting for you to sign."

"Supposing I don't? Supposing I refuse, and approach my Member of Parliament, who happens to be a publicity hound? I can expose your drugging games and torture. . . ."

Collard waited until he had passed a truck before answering. He was smiling placidly. "You'll be dismissed as a crank, old son. A fourteen-carat, revolving-eyed loony, steam coming out of your ears. You were shot, only you weren't. You were in hospital, only it wasn't. I'll deny every word of it, and I was your host this weekend, remember? Your main witness.

"No, John, you turned up on Friday night, drunk as a lord. Slept most of Saturday, woke with a hangover and a vile temper, badgered me to drive you home. You're a rotten house guest." He sounded sincerely aggrieved, quite the old Wrecks.

A thought struck Brierly.

Collard caught the flicker of expression and his smile turned sardonic. "Certainly, you could do useful work for your pals at the embassy, even in industrial research. Except that they won't touch you with a ten-foot pole. May even make spirited attempts to bump you off.

"They expected you to come over with a bag of goodies. Instead, you broke the rules and exposed their prize possession. In dire emergency, wounded, he had to be warned, you'll tell them. Fine. The snag being that you weren't wounded, and the pain was only in your head.

"So they'll conclude, and one can't blame them, that you've been turned. Full confession in return for immunity, and you sealed the bargain by handing us Sir Mark."

For the first time in his life, Brierly rued treachery, even the unintentional, meant-for-the-best variety into which he had been tricked.

"Don't involve that wretched man in your sick vendettas.

We were casual friends at Oxford. . . . Lord knows why I rang him. He didn't remember me, must have thought I was crazy—which I was, thanks to you."

"Didn't remember you, but accepted your collect call and listened until he sensed that you'd cracked, that you were a liability. You'd have us believe you haven't contacted him in years, but you knew his ex-directory phone number, changed when he moved less than a year back. Won't wash, John. We'll get him now."

"Stop the car. I'll find a cab. It stinks in here." Brierly climbed out and glared back from the sidewalk. "Clever bastard! Dedicated to saving this glorious land of the free, and turning it into a jungle in the process."

"Give over," Collard protested comfortably, unwrapping a boiled sweet. "Suppose you'd been a Soviet citizen feeding *us* secrets. Your Kremlin pals wouldn't have *pretended* to shoot you."

"Same old cliché argument. Admit it, Collard. In your ideal world, you'd shoot me and glory in it."

The other man pondered on that, moodily gunning the engine. When he replied, John Brierly was shaken by his manifest sincerity. "Never. You're a pathetic excuse for a decent human being, John, but I wouldn't shoot you."

Rex Collard put the car in gear and rattled away. He was half a mile off when he chuckled abruptly, muttering as he crunched the sweet, "Not in the leg, anyway." ST

TONY WILMOT

We herewith present another of the fine British writers, who, as yet, are not well known in the United States. The sympathetic criminal theme is popular in Britain—but not as common when it contains such a satisfying, diabolical twist.

THE LAST OF THE MIDNIGHT GARDENERS

Walter Oates said, "That's the third midnight gardener this week." He threw the typescript into his OUT tray and yawned. "Do we have any appointments this afternoon, Edna?"

Miss Tewsland, his secretary, smiled. She wasn't quite sure what he meant, but she had learned that if anything was guaranteed to exasperate a fiction editor it was contributors who sent in stories involving the type of characters Mr. Oates called "midnight gardeners."

She checked the appointments book. "None . . . Walter," she cooed.

Walter nodded, pleased. Edna always showed plenty of leg whenever she leaned across her desk. It was one of the things he liked about her.

"Well, then, why don't we take the afternoon off? I know a cozy little bistro in Soho. . . ."

The phone rang. Miss Tewsland answered it and handed him the receiver, mouthing, "Your wife."

Walter said, "Hello, dear. Yes, it *is* rather a busy time right now. No, dear, I don't know what time I'll be home." He caught the expression in Miss Tewsland's eyes. "But I expect I'll be late."

Walter hung up and winked at Miss Tewsland. He was

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looking forward to a leisurely lunch. And afterwards . . . well, Miss Tewsland's flat was only a taxi-ride from the bistro . . . and she was always the soul of discretion.

At his club the next day, Walter was buttonholed by his barrister friend, Reggie. "We need your professional opinion, old boy. About the *modus operandi* of murder."

Groaning inwardly, Walter joined Reggie's group. He would much rather be thinking about Edna.

"We were saying, Walter, how so many wife murderers are mild-mannered, insignificant little chaps. But I don't suppose the fellows who write for your crime magazine bother about that. I bet their murderers have more than a touch of James Bond. Am I right?"

"Sorry to disappoint you, Reggie. The characters are just like their creators. They're all bank clerks, civil servants, insurance men. . . . They live in suburbia and suffer in silence for years. Then, one day, something snaps. They do in the wife and bury her in the cabbage patch—usually in the middle of the night. Ridiculous, of course. Which is why I call them *midnight gardeners*. Police would rumble them in ten seconds flat."

Over a brandy, Reggie said, "Well, then, there's an idea for your magazine, Walter. A competition for the perfect murder—told in story form. The rules would be simple: No psychopaths, no crimes of passion, no killing in self-defense. It must be murder premeditated. With a logical motive. And it must be foolproof, so that even if the police suspected, they'd never be able to prove it."

Jane, Walter's wife, said, "You ought to relax more. Bringing all that work home. . . ."

Walter merely grunted. Since the announcement of the competition, entries had been pouring in. But none even came close to being feasible *and* foolproof. Too many weed killers, barbiturate overdoses, electric shocks in the bath.

"What about that one, dear? A man uses a blade of ice as a knife."

"Old hat," Walter snapped. Jane had never taken any real interest in crime stories before. Nurse-and-doctor romances were more her line.

"Why don't you write one yourself?"

Walter stared. "Me?"

"Why not? You know all the plots inside out. I'm sure you could think up something original."

He shook his head. "It wouldn't be ethical. I'm one of the judges."

"That's easily remedied. Stand down."

The more Walter thought about it, the more he liked the idea. He certainly knew every murder method from rare South American poisons with no known antidotes to air embolism by injection. And it wouldn't actually be cheating. Indeed, he'd be doing his readers a service. Reggie would stand in for him on the panel of judges. He would call him in the morning.

That night, typing up the story, he lost all track of time, and it was past 3 A.M. when he'd sewn up all the loose ends. He typed a pseudonym on the title page and left it ready for posting.

At the club, members were asking one another incredulously, "Heard about old Walter? He's snuffed it."

Even the old codgers dozing in the library roused themselves to hear how his wife had found him dead in bed. She'd been unable to wake him when she took him his early morning cup of tea and, thinking he'd had a stroke, had phoned the doctor.

"Poor old Walter," Reggie murmured. "He was the last person I'd have thought to be a heart case."

"Well, that's what they think it was," the club secretary said. "The actual cause of death is a mystery, I'm told, but the pathologist definitely rules out foul play. His wife said he'd been burning the midnight oil a lot lately. Overdid it, I suppose. Must have been quite a shock for her."

Jane was lolling in a chair on the sundeck, carrying out doc-

tor's orders. He'd told her she needed a complete change, to get over the shock. "A Mediterranean cruise for you, Mrs. Oates. And don't be in a hurry to pick up the threads again."

Walter hadn't been wealthy, she reflected, but with his life insurance and the sale of the house. . . . It had hurt, at first, finding out about Miss Tewsland. Now it didn't seem to matter.

Gino, a young Italian steward, had been flirting with her for days. She had almost forgotten what it was like . . . having a man look at her like that.

"Why don't you bring a bottle of champagne to my cabin, Gino?"

"Si, Signora."

"And Gino—bring *two* glasses."

"Pronto, Signora." He smiled.

In her shoulder bag was a typescript. She took it out and tore it up, then she dropped the pieces over the side of the ship.

Too bad about Walter, she thought. He would have won the competition hands down. His method was diabolically clever, yet so simple. It was a pity she couldn't tell anybody, but she might need to use it again. . . . ST

DAN J. MARLOWE

Dan Marlowe is a crime writer of considerable stature, his masterpiece being ***The Name of the Game is Death,*** *the first of the Earl Drake series. Although most of his literary output has been in the form of novels, many of which have been translated into various other languages, he's written a number of fine short stories as well.*

In SOMETHING A LITTLE LIKE LOVE, believable characters display real-life shortcomings and emotions when confronted with real-life situations. A cop can be human, too.

SOMETHING A LITTLE LIKE LOVE

She came into the tavern like the first eight bars of The Flight of the Bumblebee. She was all energy and movement. She was young, and her smile was special. Men and women alike greeted her warmly as she slipped out of her coat. She stamped the snow from her boots before she pulled them off, revealing fuzzy white socks.

Her cheeks were flushed from the cold outside. Her pants suit was pink and attractive. It also looked expensive. She had earrings that appeared to be real pearls. When her gloves came off, she was wearing a large sparkler on a finger that indicated neither engagement nor marriage. I notice things like that.

"Hi, Janie!" the man on the bar stool next to mine said.

"Nice to see you, Janie!" a woman called from a booth.

Janie smiled, and her smile seemed to be aimed directly at everyone in the room.

"Draw two when your elbow's limbered up, Janie," a young guy said from the other end of the bar.

It surprised me to find she worked there. The way she was dressed, she looked a lot more like a customer. No,

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maybe that wasn't right. The Yellow Moon Tavern was in a blue-collar neighborhood. But there was nothing blue-collar about Janie. She wasn't beautiful, but she was bright and cheerful and pretty in a pert-looking way.

She drew and served the beers. She was working the bar in her fuzzy white socks. It was only my third time in the Yellow Moon. I hadn't been living too long in the area. My rooming house was two blocks away.

I had finished my second beer and was ready to leave. Instead, I sat there, studying the way the tavern had livened up at Janie's sparkling entrance. It had been quiet before. Right now, people were talking and laughing as if someone had turned on their juices.

"Two hamburgers, Janie!" the young guy who had called for the beers said.

The girl went to a small fridge and took out four patties, which she pressed into two burgers before dropping them on a tiny grill. She'd be called away to serve a beer, bottled or draft. But then she'd go back to the grill and turn over the burgers. She was taking care of business, which is the way it should be with food.

Janie placed the grilled burgers between toasted rolls and took them to the young fellow. She also brought him a lazy susan holding salt and pepper, plus small bowls of mustard, chili, relish, onion, and pickles.

The burgers really smelled good. I waited until Janie was looking in my direction, pointed at the young guy's burgers, held up two fingers, and tapped my chest. "Medium," I said. Janie nodded and went back to the grill.

The two burgers were enough to make a meal. "Excellent," I said to Janie when she came down to my end of the bar for my money. The price was right, too. It was nice to find a tavern that wasn't trying to get rich on its fast food. "I haven't seen you in here before," I continued.

"Tuesday and Friday nights," she said.

Between Janie and the burgers, I made a note where to be on Tuesday and Friday nights.

When I left the stool to get my coat, I saw her boots un-

der the coat tree. They looked like real leather. When she'd been across the bar from me, serving the burgers, her pants suit had still looked like quality. It was strange for a part-time barmaid to be dressed like that. But I forgot about it during the two-block walk to my rooming house. It was so cold, the snow made crunching sounds under my galoshes.

The rooming-house front door opened on a communal sitting room which no one ever used. The rental bedrooms were on the second floor. My two fellow roomers were both alcoholics, but they did their drinking in private. One was an obvious backslider who looked to be about two signatures away from being committed. The other was a scrawny, dazed-looking type who seemed to be getting it on for the first time.

I went through the living room and, after turning a corner, passed through a hanging curtain into the kitchen beyond. The roomers had access to it and the big fridge, but none of us used it, including me.

Maureen, my landlady, was carrying a six-pack to the table as I entered. As usual, she was in her nightgown. She'd run through three husbands and had been left with the rooming house. It wasn't a good thing for her ultimate well-being, because she couldn't do anything well enough to stop a water wheel in a dry spell. Except in bed.

She uncapped two beers and handed me one. A lot of days Maureen played life on the black keys, but that's how it is: everyone on earth is either a dog or a hydrant. But some nights she could even remember how she used to do it, and we'd go downstairs to her basement room and exercise her bed a bit. On her back, she wasn't a bad old trout when she paid attention to what she was doing, which wasn't 100% of the time. Some nights, though, she was really on her game.

I drank half my beer, then said goodnight and went upstairs.

Tuesday night I was back on my regular stool in the Yellow Moon when Janie came in with a rush. She seemed to do ev-

erything in a hurry. The few customers had been studying their beers quietly, but Janie hadn't even moved behind the bar when the place brightened up like a sunrise.

She exchanged the usual hello-and-how-are you with the regulars, and when she looked in my direction she gave me a little half-smile. When someone ordered a burger, I caught her eye again and held up two fingers. The burgers were just as good as the first time.

I noticed that night how closely she hung around the telephone on the back bar. She was never far away, and at every ring she swooped down on it. If there was a message for one of the drinkers, she looked and sounded disappointed. It wasn't hard to figure out she was hoping for a call herself.

She had come in wearing the twin of the first pants suit, except in burnt orange instead of pink. She had on the same boots. Her outfits were really classy. It made me think again that she was dressed more for a party than for work.

Then I overheard a bearded type telling his friend that Janie worked in an insurance office days. The Yellow Moon was just a part-time gig for her. She probably did her partying after closing time. I was young once, too.

I stayed to the end of her shift. Ray, the owner, came in and checked out her register. Janie put on her boots and coat and went out the back door to the parking lot. I went out the front door and walked around on snow-covered ice to the lot.

By the time I reached it, Janie was climbing into the passenger-side front seat of a new Continental. The big car roared out of the lot and down the street way above the speed limit.

I walked back to my room, thankful I hadn't made a move on Janie. Who appreciates a turndown after asking for a date? I didn't think she would have been mean about it, but it was definitely an aggravation I didn't need.

The next morning I sat in the squad room and listened to the lieutenant's briefing on the city's current crime wave. Or

waves. I've only been on the detective squad for a year. I was the youngest man in the room. I got lucky on street patrol and broke a case that had had the captain chewing his hangnails. It boosted me up the stationhouse ladder a couple of quick rungs.

Mitch, my partner, is five years older than I am. He looks easy-going, but he'd rather knock you down than walk around you. He knows a lot more about case procedure than I do, but at the same time, he's learned to respect my hunches. Against the odds, sometimes they click.

We were assigned to interview four fur dealers whose stores had been worked over by clever break-in artists. One of the thieves could have made a living as a fur appraiser. Only the best was taken, and they left no receipts. They usually stripped or half-stripped the shop windows, too.

We talked to the dealers. A few patterns emerged, but not enough for us to be positive we were looking for the same operators in each case. In the afternoon, we sat down in the stationhouse and worked our way through MO's in the store-breaking-and-entering file. There wasn't anything that fit exactly. Plus, a couple of the possibles turned out to be already tucked away in the slammer.

I missed Friday night at the Yellow Moon, but I was occupying my usual stool the next Tuesday when Janie rushed it. She was wearing a different snappy-looking outfit and a different pair of boots, black instead of tan. I could see her watching the clock while she worked behind the bar. Or she watched the telephone. One or the other all night long.

Finally, she dialed a call herself. I hadn't seen her do that before. She couldn't have talked more than 15 seconds. Tried to talk, actually. She stood there with the receiver limp in her hand, looking crushed. Like people do when they've been hung up on.

She moved down the bar in my direction. Fewer customers were there. She was trying to keep from crying, and she didn't want anyone to notice. She stopped a few feet away from me, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

"I like your clothes, Janie," I said.

She turned to look at me, surprised. "Thanks."

"Nice variety," I added. She was again close enough to me so that I could see her current outfit was one-of-a-kind.

"Thanks," she said again. "I'm lucky I can wear my size right off a rack."

The swallow of beer I took didn't have as much flavor as its predecessors. Janie pulled herself together and went back down the bar. She became her usual bouncy self with the drinkers. When she got busy, I went over to the coat tree, picked up one of her black boots, and examined it. It was Grade-A, genuine leather. Hand-tooled. I knew I was holding in my hand one-half of a $300-to-$400 pair of women's boots.

I went back to my room early that night.

When I looked in on Maureen in the kitchen, she was passed out on the table, her head surrounded by empty beer bottles.

I climbed the stairs and went to bed.

Friday night, I stopped in at the Yellow Moon early and caught Ray working the bar. "I understand Janie's in the insurance game," I said to him when he brought me a beer. "Running an office for one of the big ones, maybe?"

"Janie?" He shook his head. "She's a file clerk. She's a nice kid, but brains—not hardly. Now if you said T & A. . . ."

"I noticed."

"Men do," Ray said as he walked away from me.

I sat there staring down into my beer. Janie came in a few minutes later wearing another outfit I'd never seen before. When I thought about it, I'd never seen her in the same one twice. For a change, she seemed subdued. Her usual bubbly, hey-let's-live-it-up-guys attitude was missing.

Then, two hours into her shift, she got a telephone call. It was like watching a church steeple light up. I knew what it meant. At the end of her trick the Continental was due to be back in the parking lot again.

I was already out there when it arrived. I couldn't get a good look at the driver because of tinted glass. Janie scoot-

ed out the back door and pulled open the Continental's passenger door. "Didn't I tell you never to call me at the condo?" a hard-sounding voice growled at her.

"I'm sorry, Bobby," she said meekly.

She jumped in, the door slammed, and the Continental took off. I already had its license number. The next morning, I called a friend at the Motor Vehicle Bureau and asked him to run the plate for me. I didn't want to do it through our police computer. Mitch and I had to go out, but when I came back there was a message in my tray.

The Continental was registered to a Robert Dillon.

The address was in an expensive condo neighborhood.

I went down the hall to Records and asked what we had on a Robert Dillon at that address. Records didn't show that address, but on Robert Dillon it turned out we had two pages' worth, single-spaced. It started at age eleven, and he'd run the course. From the number of times he'd been caught, if he ever had a brainstorm it would surely be a light drizzle.

Behind a gun, he'd knocked off mom-and-pop groceries, gas stations, liquor stores, and loan offices. Then he'd moved on to fur stores. Expensive fur stores. I found that interesting. The last entry on Dillon's yellow sheet brought me up short, though. Two years ago he'd been sent up for a 3-to-5 year jolt. I looked again at the date he'd taken the fall.

"Records, what's the chance this (blasphemy-deleted) crook could make parole on this charge?"

The clerk looked at the entry. "Good, if he kept his nose clean inside. He's out?"

"He's out."

"They're supposed to let us know."

They hadn't. I went back to my desk. Mitch came in and sat down across from me. I was going through the reports he and I had made out after talking to the ripped-off fur dealers.

"Ya got something?" Mitch asked me hopefully.

"A hunch."

"You usually do," he grunted. "What is it this time?"

"How about a paroled fur-store heistman for these jobs?"

He nodded slowly. "You found one?"

I tapped the reports in front of me. "In addition to the stores' other losses, half a dozen designer outfits and accessories were stolen from display windows."

"So?"

"So call the dealers and it will turn out the outfits were all the same size."

"You and your hunches," Mitch sighed.

But he reached for the telephone.

Anyone who spends Christmas Eve in a tavern is a certified loser, but on Christmas Eve I was holding down my customary stool at the Yellow Moon. Worse, I knew I'd have been there even if I didn't have Janie and her boyfriend on my mind. How much choice do you have when you're living in a room?

It wasn't one of Janie's nights on duty, but she came in around ten o'clock to socialize. She was wearing a cocktail dress with an off-the-shoulder cape that a Hollywood actress would have killed for. And she was wearing a fur stole. She hung up her coat, but not the stole. That she kept on wearing. Someone might make it out of the place with her coat, but no one was making it out of there with her stole.

I'd been hoping she didn't know the value of the stuff Dillon was giving her. Stealing for her. Woolworth's or Gucci's, it shouldn't make a difference, but it does. It didn't help that I knew my thinking was a little out of the mainstream.

Ray had brought in a guy with a Polaroid camera. The photographer roamed the place, taking everyone's picture. They were passed around for all to see. When they came to me, I palmed one of a smiling Janie before I handed the others back. Later, I slipped it into my pocket.

Janie was watching the clock, not the phone. Twice, she made trips to the back door to look out over the parking lot. Each time she came back with a little more of her natural ebullience dimmed. She sat down alone in an empty booth, and waited.

And waited.

She finally left by herself.

She barely held her face together until she reached the sidewalk.

I was standing across the street in a doorway. It's tough at Janie's age to be stood up on a date, but it's twice as tough on Christmas Eve. I watched her go down the street to the bus stop. I waited until I saw her get on one—it's a rough neighborhood—and then I walked back to the rooming house.

Maureen was in the kitchen, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. She offered me a drink. Bourbon. No mix. "Let's," she said before I had my first swallow down.

"Why not?" I replied.

It was an ungracious thing to say, but Maureen didn't seem to notice. We went downstairs. Maureen tried everything she knew, which was considerable, but it did no good. "Don't worry about it," she said finally. "Next time you'll be swingin' on tight hinges."

I got up from the bed. "Merry Christmas," I said over my shoulder on my way to the stairs.

"Merry Christmas," she echoed mournfully.

Tuesday evening when I went into the Yellow Moon, Ray was behind the bar with a strange girl. It took only a couple of minutes to see that he was breaking her in on the job. I waited until Ray came down the bar near me before I said anything. "Janie taking the night off?" I asked him.

"She's quitting," he said. He sounded grouchy. "On Friday. Sure hate to lose her. Her gross here was about double anyone else I put behind the stick, including me sometimes."

"She say where she was going?"

"Taking a trip with her boyfriend. I heard her talking up San Diego the other night. That was before she told me she was quitting. She's past ready right now. Already left her luggage with me in the office. Funny how women can accumulate stuff."

Ray walked away from me.

So what was this Jekyll-Hyde act of Dillon? First a stand-up, and probably not for the first time, then a vacation trip? I'd already been afraid that Dillon might decide he'd skimmed the cream locally in his line. If he wasn't a total ice cube, he had to feel the heat rising around him. It wasn't too surprising that he'd pull one last job then take off. Spread his action around somewhere else until things quieted down in town.

And get Janie away so there was no possibility anything could be traced back to him through her?

And then dump her for good?

I finished my beer and walked back to the rooming house. My car was parked in front of it in a mound of slush. I got into it with only one foot soaking wet, then drove over to Mitch's place. Susie, his wife, opened the door.

"Well, welcome, stranger!" she exclaimed. "Come in, come in! The bull of the woods is in the living room."

I went inside. Mitch was sprawled on his back on the couch with their six-month-old daughter on his chest. Susie is Mitch's second wife—cops don't stay married long—and she gets right down in the dirt with him, sometimes literally. He lucked out when he found her. She had tucked pillows in around the baby so she couldn't roll off Mitch.

Susie picked up the baby, and Mitch opened his eyes. He started to sit up when he saw me, but I motioned for him to relax. Susie was examining me while she cradled the cooing baby in her arms. "You're thin," she said. "How's the divorce coming?"

Mitch looked embarrassed. He would never have asked me, even though he worked with me every day. "Messy," I said. "I signed my share of the house over to Mecklin's." Mecklin's was the most expensive boutique in town.

"Most divorces are messy, but I never heard anything like what she did to you," Susie said. "Going out and hiring a room to keep all the clothes she charged to your account while she had no intention of ever wearing them? Just for meanness?"

"Education is what you get when you read the fine print

of a contract," I said. "Experience is what you get when you don't. She figured it out, and she set me up. Ever try to sell expensive, brand-new, but second-hand women's clothing?" Susie's half-smile was sympathetic. "I'd do better trying to sell cracked engine blocks. You could say I've learned a bit about women's clothes."

Susie shook her head, then carried the baby into the bedroom. "We got something?" Mitch asked me.

"Friday night." I sat down and laid out the whole thing for him. Except about Janie. That was the same as laying it out for him without telling him how I knew what I knew, but Mitch doesn't push.

"How are we going to tab the job he goes to?" he asked.

"We won't. We'll grab him when he comes back to his condo to pack for his trip. If we get a break, he might have that night's score still with him."

"Suppose he doesn't come back to the condo?"

"Then we've got a fall-back position."

The Yellow Moon.

Mitch sighed when I didn't say anything else. "You and your hunches," he grumbled.

But it went down like clockwork.

We waited for Dillon in the condo parking space under his building. He rolled in around 11:30 P.M. in a van. The van made more sense than the Continental. He could get more into it and nobody could see what it was.

We walked over to him when he stepped down from the van. I held out my hand for his keys. "You ought to smarten up, Bobby," I told him. "We've been walking around on your heels for six weeks." I said it so he could never think his problem had arisen with Janie.

For a second, I thought he was going to war with me. I hoped he would. If someone spits in my face, I'll never say it's raining. When I was a kid, my mother used to pin bail money inside my jacket when I went out on Saturday nights.

But then Dillon took a look at Mitch, and he gave me the keys. I handed them to Mitch, who climbed into the van.

"Loaded," he called out after a minute. "Full-length fur coats, fur jackets, capes, and stoles."

We took Dillon up in the elevator to his place. There was a woman there. Not Janie. She was about 35. She took one look at the three of us and no one had to draw her a diagram. "You stupid idiot!" she spit at Dillon. She had eyes like a lynx.

Packed bags were scattered all over the floor. Half of them were women's bags. It came to me belatedly that Dillon had been going to take off with the lynx. He knew that after the talking she'd done, Janie would cut and run when she was stood up this time. It would brush off the last local link between Dillon and the fur store jobs.

"Call for backup, Mitch, and then run them downtown," I said. "I've got an errand to run."

I drove to the Yellow Moon. It was near closing time. Ray was alone behind the bar. "Janie?" I said.

"Her guy never showed. She gave up a little before one. And I mean she took it hard. She came blubbering to me and hit me up for the bus fare to San Diego. Said she couldn't stand to be around here where everyone would know her broken-hearted business."

So that was it.

I should have called someone in San Diego to check the incoming buses for Janie. She knew what Dillon was doing. But I didn't call. No one was looking for Janie. The law had Dillon and the lynx.

Mitch and I were just about buried by the squad room's congratulations in the morning. "He hunched it," Mitch kept saying, pointing to me. "He hunched it."

I didn't tell him I'd just about hunched us out of the ballpark. My first thought had been to wait at the Yellow Moon and scoop Dillon when he came for Janie. Since he hadn't intended to come for her, we'd have been waiting until the Fourth of July.

I'd changed my mind because at the Yellow Moon I'd have had to grab Janie, too. Either that or make Mitch an accomplice. And I hadn't wanted to do that, either.

"If you hear me say anytime within the next couple of months that I'm taking time off to go to San Diego, you punch me right in the mouth," I told Mitch when we left the squad room for coffee.

He cocked an eyebrow at me. "There's a reason, ol' buddy?"

"No reason. Just do it."

"Ya got it, pardner. Ours not to reason why."

I've had time to think it over now.

Janie's no martyr. She won't stay in San Diego very long. She'll be back, maybe even at the Yellow Moon. Of course, she'll be looking for Dillon. I drove downtown and had a talk with the condo superintendent. If Janie shows up, the super will get an address from her where Dillon will supposedly contact her. And then the super will call me.

I'm really not sure what I'll do when she does.

I've still got her picture in my wallet.

Crazy, huh?

Once bent, seldom unbent, as nobody knows better than me, but I still have a hunch she could make it. ST

THUG

In contemporary usage, *thug* may designate almost any variety of ruffian, gangster, or robber. But for almost a thousand years, it referred specifically to an organized gang of professional murderers who flourished in India.

Worshippers of Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction, their name was derived from *thag* (a cheat). Their acts of murder and pillage were originally related to their worship. Thugs seldom robbed living persons, first strangling their victims with a rope or a cloth before taking their possessions.

Various ranks within the gang were open to successful killers. One of the most vicious of the Thugs, a bloodthirsty little man named Buhram, confessed to have personally strangled 931 persons. Small wonder that the outside world adopted the word *thug* and applied it to all types of cutthroats.

Marvin Vanoni

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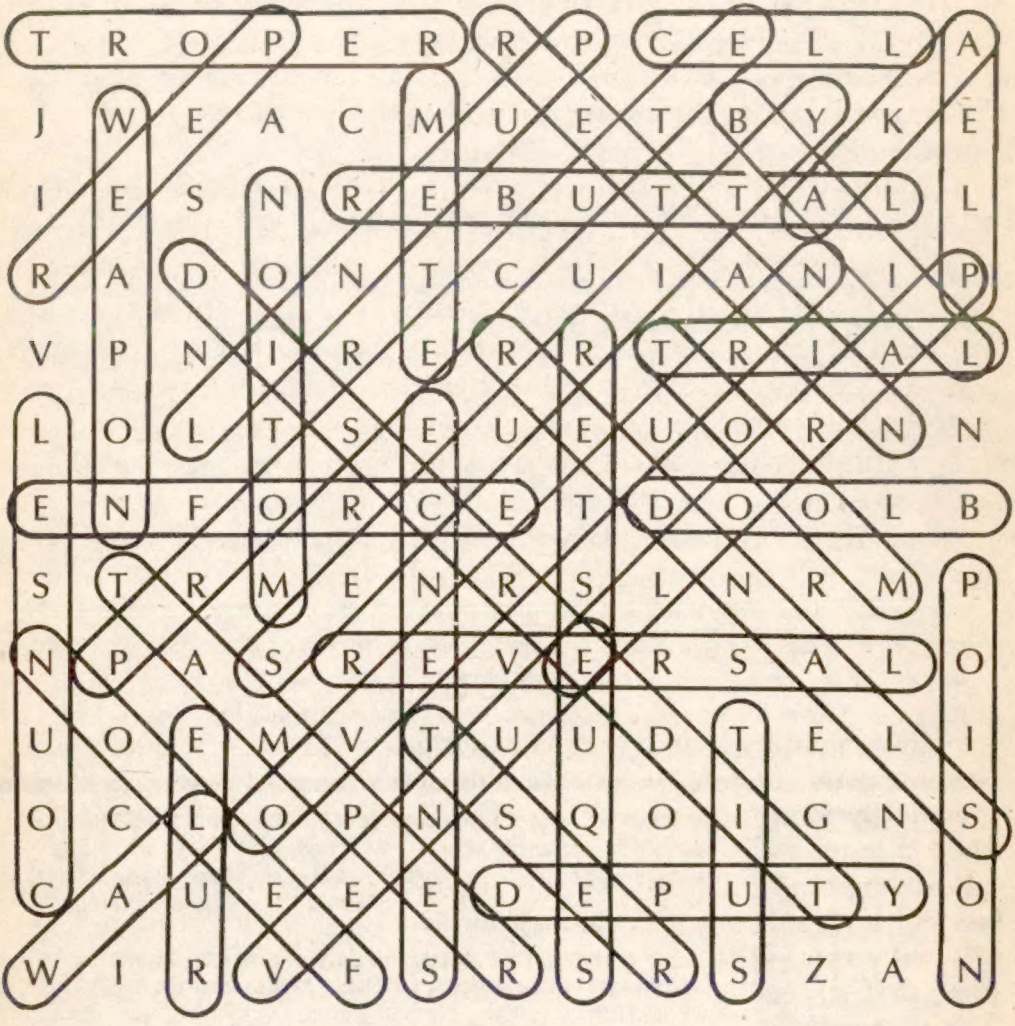
SAINT SEARCHWORD

by John K. Young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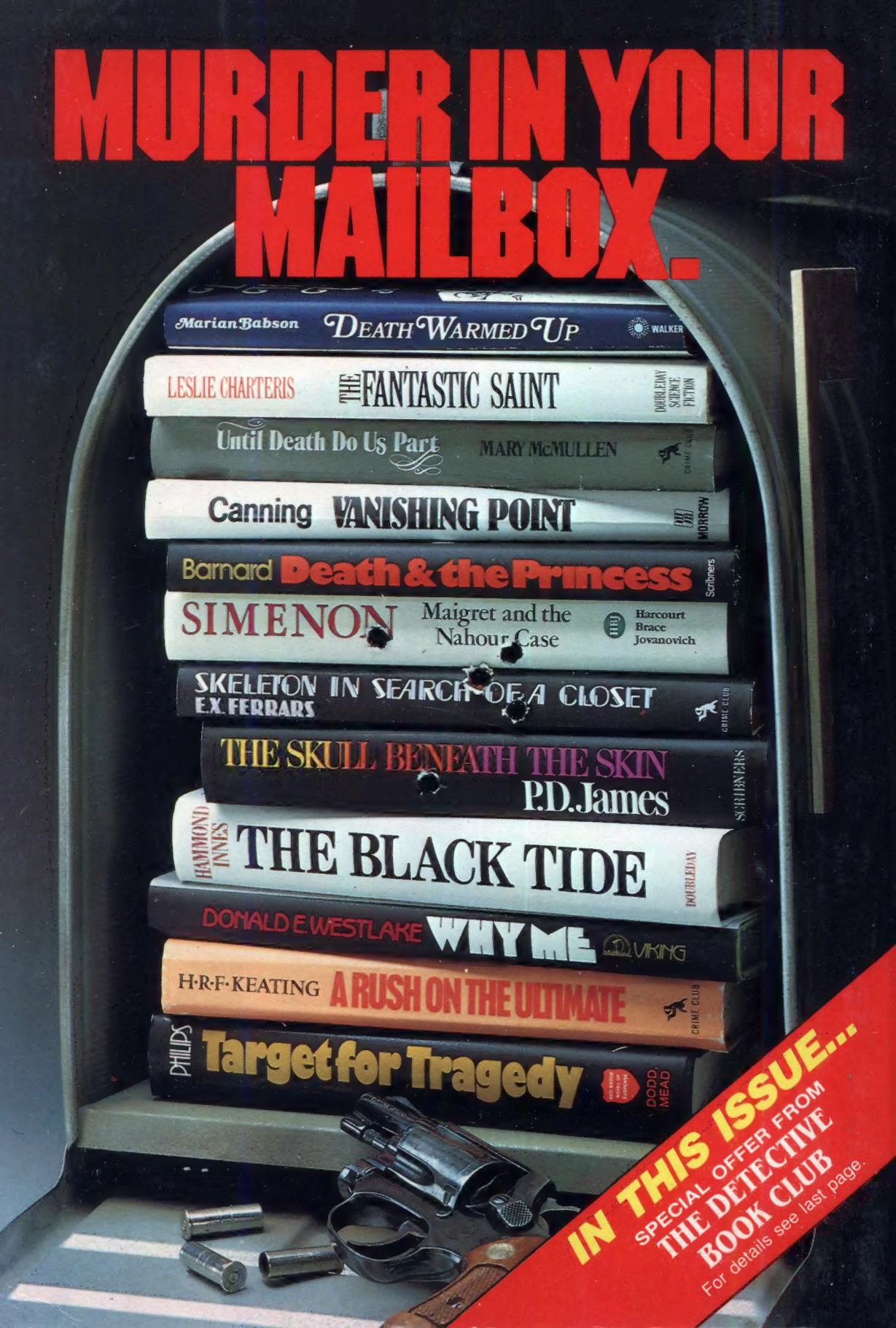

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